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"BY HEAVEN! DEADWOOD DICK!" SUDDENLY UTTERED A VOICE FROM
SOMEWHERE NEAR THE ENTRANCE TO THE SALOON.

OR, The Way of the Transgressor.

BY EDWARD L. WHEELER,
AUTHOR OF "DEADWOOD DICK," NOVELS,
ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER I. OLD SLY SLATER.

THE classic Western "city" of Red Dog, New Mexico Territory, was in a turmoil of excitement and commotion. Since first the town had been started, the oldest inhabitant could not remember of its people being so generally aroused.

The cause of this excitement was a brutal murder, the author of which was unknown.

It was in the second month of the year, and the town was alive with strangers of various nationalities and types of character.

Some were going to strike out to work upon

the cattle-ranges below, others were to go to work in the mines, above, or go off on prospecting tours through the range, while not a few intended to hang around Red Dog, and live by their wits. These, as may be surmised, were mostly gamblers, and sharpers.

Red Dog, considering its size, is about as lively a town as there is in Arizona.

During the winter and spring, it has an extensive floating population, and lots of money is left there; consequently, it is a sort of an Elysian Field for the nimble-fingered card-sharp, and the equally expert pickpocket.

The mines contribute a regular flow of pards who cannot rest until they've 'blowed in' their last dollar on games or 'booze'; the cowboys would die of *ennui* if they missed their periodical monthly spree; then, there are cattle-buyers with fat wallets, and men who have come to the sunny clime in search of homes, all of whom contribute to make Red Dog a red-hot and rampant resort.

One of the most popular and respected, as well as one of the most wealthy men of Red Dog, was Alonzo Israel, the banker and broker. He was a Hebrew, but a genial, accommodating man, and was esteemed by all who knew him.

He did not exactly do a regular banking business, but exchanged paper money for gold, and took sums of money for safe-keeping, charging a percentage for the same. He had the only burglar-proof safe in the town, and made quite a respectable income out of this business alone.

Israel was a bachelor, and lived in the little board office, where he carried on his business.

Although no one knew positively, it was generally understood that he was very rich.

If a tenderfoot struck the town of Red Dog, without the price of a meal in his wallet, Israel would invariably go down in his pocket and help the poor "cuss" out; and it was these little acts of charity that made him popular.

Several days before that which opens our story, a syndicate of cattle-men had struck the town of Red Dog, and, at the advice of the sheriff, had made a large deposit of money with Israel, for safe-keeping, until they should want to use it.

This, with various other amounts which he had on hand, made the Jew the custodian of a good-sized fortune of other people's money—a responsibility that many another a man would not have cared to shoulder, for as in most far Western towns Red Dog had a plentiful supply of tough characters, and it was by no means safe for a man to have any considerable sum of money about his clothes, after dark.

And, now, this morning, the people of Red Dog were thrown into a state of great excitement, by the discovery of the murder.

The earliest citizen abroad was a man named Grady, who, in passing Israel's office, saw that the door was wide open.

Suspecting that all was not right, he turned back, entered the office, and there found the Jew lying in a pool of blood—dead!

Grady immediately sounded an alarm, and soon had the whole town aroused, and the majority of them congregated about the Jew's office.

When it was further discovered that the safe had been opened, and robbed of everything of value, the excitement became unprecedented.

Who had committed the double crime?

Here was a question that found expression on every hand, but which no one could answer.

There were plenty of ruffians in the place, who were none too good to commit such a crime, but no clew to the identity of the murderer had been left behind; so who was to be suspected?

This was a matter which the sheriff, Bill Booth, and the syndicate of capitalists, discussed in all its different lights, but without coming to any definite conclusion.

Booth knew the pedigree of nearly every local crook in the town, and, after a private inspection, came to the conclusion that none of them had had a hand in the murder and robbery.

On the other hand, there was a large influx of strangers in camp, of various stations in life, and it was not improbable that there were one or more of the lot who had been connected with the tragedy.

This theory was further strengthened by the fact that the safe had undoubtedly been opened by an expert, there being no marks to indicate that the heavy door had been forced open.

After the sheriff had expressed his opinion to a syndicate and a number of others who had been heavy losers, a resolution was proposed and adopted, offering five hundred dollars reward, for the reclamation of the stolen property, and an additional like sum for the capture of the

safe-robber, or robbers, to which a few of Israel's friends added another five hundred for the capture and conviction of the murderer.

All day long the streets of Red Dog were thronged with a crowd of restless, excited and revengeful people, and the outlook for the murderer, should he be found, was exceedingly dubious.

But, that he would be found, was also exceedingly doubtful. That he had secured at least twenty thousand dollars' worth of plunder was reason enough for him never to be seen again in that vicinity.

The syndicate, and a few other losers, held consultation, nearly all day, in an upper room of the Arizona Hotel, where, liberally supplied with wines and liquors, they awaited the investigations that were being prosecuted by the sheriff. Among the lot was a man named, or who gave his name as, Abram Audley. He claimed to be a New York broker, and averred that he was out six thousand dollars by the robbery.

He was a stout individual, with a huge reddish beard, and hair to match, and taking into consideration the fact that he was not very well dressed, he looked more like an Indiana hoosier than a metropolitan speculator.

Late in the afternoon there came a knock upon the door of the room occupied by the consulting committee, and upon the door being opened, a seedy-looking individual walked in.

Yes, not alone was he seedy in appearance, but he looked decidedly like a bum.

He was of a good figure, but his garments were loose, ill-fitting, patched and greasy.

He wore a thick, yellowish beard, with hair to match, and the fiery hue of what of his visage was to be seen, proclaimed that beyond doubt he was addicted to excessive use of strong drink.

A badly wrecked white plug hat was crushed down upon his head; six dangerous-looking revolvers gave a bristling aspect to his belt, and in his right hand he carried a heavy cane, which was a serviceable weapon, in itself.

As soon as President Lawrence of the syndicate opened the door, this uncomely individual stalked into the room, without invitation, and plumped himself down into a chair, with a snort of relief.

Lawrence closed the door, and turned to the new-comer:

"Well, sir," he demanded, "who are you, and what do you want here?"

"Me?" queried the bum, with a sort of leer. "Why, I tho't I'd jest drop in an' see if I couldn't make a dicker for the job!"

"The job? What job do you mean, sir?"

"Why about ther murder an' robbery bizness. When I struck ther town to-day, I see'd all ther reward papers stuck up round, an' my han's got to itchin' ter fondle them 'ar shekels, an' so I tho't I'd mazurky up here and see ef I couldn't corral the job!"

"Humph! What do you know about the murder or robbery?"

"Nary a bit, 'cept I heerd 'em talkin' 'bout it, round town."

"Then, how on earth do you, a greenhorn, expect to be able to ferret out the mystery of this crime?"

"Greenhorn, hey? Lookkee heer, stranger, I reckon you don't know who you're talkin' to, do yer?"

"Well, can't say that I do, and don't know as I care to. Judging by appearances, I should not estimate you to be a person of much account!"

"Shouldn't, hey? Waal, neow, thar's whar yer plum off yer kerbase. Guess ye never heerd of Old Sly Slater, the Premier Sleuth?"

"Never!"

"Waal, I'm he, an' I don't take no back pew fer any detective in the land! Yer noddle o' memory must be off on a strike, or ye w'u'd recomember of heerin' uv at least some o' my exploits!"

"I never heard of any of them, nor of you, either!" Lawrence replied, coldly, "and as for you being a detective, my opinion is that about the only thing you can detect, is bad whisky!"

"Ye don't mean it?"

"Most assuredly!"

"An' yer think I ain't what I represented? Ye take me fer an impostor?"

"I must confess that I do."

"And I, too," spoke up Abram Audley.

"Oh! you do, do yer?" and the uncouth detective turned his gaze upon the New Yorker. "Who in thunder are you, I'd like to know, you red-whiskered galoot? Fer a chaw of ter-backer, I'd wait over thar and spit in yer eye. I'm a bad man from Jumpin'-off Place, I am, and I eat a fricassee lunk like you fer breakfast ev'ry mornin'. Ef ye doubt et, jest spit on yer

hands and come fer me, and see how quick I'll make a mummy out o' you."

And springing to his feet, the Premier Sleuth struck a pugilistic attitude.

President Lawrence likewise arose to his feet.

"See here, my man, this won't do," he declared, emphatically. "We can't be annoyed by any such business as this; and, what's more, we won't. We don't know you, and don't want to have anything to do with you. If you are a detective, why, go about your business, and ferret out the murderer. If you succeed, you will receive the rewards. So now, have the kindness to take your departure, and don't intrude upon us again."

"Ye don't say?"

"Yes, I do say it, and I mean it!"

"S'posin' I ain't ready to go?"

"In that case, I presume there are enough of us to throw you out!"

"Reckon ye'r off thar. But I'll go, jest the same, since ye say so. But, as fur brick-beard over thar, I've sized him up fer a skin, and he'll bear watchin'?"

And with this declaration, Sly Slater turned and stalked from the room.

CHAPTER II.

A STARTLING WAGER.

THE Jockey Saloon was one of the popular resorts of Red Dog, at the time of which we write, for that class of male bipeds who were won't to indulge in "booze," or had any particular fancy for the fascinating sport of "bucking the tiger."

The place in itself was quite attractively fitted up, and its big patronage brought in a small-sized mint of money to the coffers of its proprietor, Pat Kelly.

Moreover, Red Dog had, for several years, maintained a reputation of harboring a square, and the men who laid a fortune upon the turn of a card, as the saying goes, were not a few.

The night following the murder of Alonzo Israel found the Jockey filled with a large audience of sporting men, combined with a sprinkling of business men, who had dropped in to pass away a social hour or two.

The tables were all running at full blast, especially the poker games, which took the preference to faro and roulette.

At one table an exceedingly lively game of poker was in session, where, besides the banker, several other parties were playing—among the number, President Lawrence, of the Eastern Syndicate of Capitalists, Abram Audley, Sheriff Bill Booth, Hair Trigger, a noted pistol-shot and bad-man-in-general, and a rather dandified but good-and-courageous looking young man of some three or four and twenty years of age.

He was sportively dressed, wore good jewelry, and with an intelligent countenance, bright brown eyes, and sunny hair and mustache, was a decidedly attractive-looking person.

The game was a hundred-dollar limit, and judging by the pile of chips in front of him, Hair Trigger was largely ahead.

Another peculiar fact about this individual was, that he alone of the half-dozen players, had a revolver lying upon the table at his right hand, cocked and ready for use.

The game progressed for over an hour, with little being said by any one, although every one but Hair Trigger was losing steadily. He seemed to have the phenomenal luck of not losing a pot, although, to all appearances, the dealing was perfectly square.

Finally the banker declared himself out of the game, although he still acted as banker.

He was soon followed by the sixth man, and almost immediately was followed by President Lawrence.

Abram Audley hung out for awhile longer until he had dropped about five hundred dollars, when he too declared quits.

Hair-Trigger then turned to the sport.

"Done, pardner?" he queried.

"By no means. I've a few hundreds more, and if I lose 'em, I've some diamonds!"

Hair-Trigger's eyes sparkled, greedily, for he had already noticed that the jewels worn by the sport were of considerable value.

"All right, pardner!" he said. "You're game, and I like to play with a game man. So, if you lose you mustn't kick. By the way, if you've no objections, I'd like your name. It always makes it pleasanter for one to know who one is playing with!"

"My name is Jolly Johnson," was the brief reply; and there the conversation dropped, and the game went on, two-handed.

But luck did not change, for Hair Trigger won steadily, and at last Jolly Johnson lost his last dollar.

Nevertheless, he did not seem to feel the least disconcerted, for he deliberately removed all the jewelry from his person, and laid it upon the table.

"Now, who will make me a decent offer for the lot?" he demanded, in a cool, calculating tone. "The stones are all perfect, and cost me a round sum of money."

The jewelry then underwent the inspection of Lawrence, Audley and Hair Trigger.

"I'll give you a hundred dollars for the lot!" Lawrence said.

"You are too liberal to live long!" was Johnson's sarcastic retort.

"I'll give two hundred!" was Audley's offer.

"It's every cent they're worth!"

"What will you give?" Johnson demanded, turning to Hair Trigger.

"Do you intend to play me with the money you get for them?"

"You bet!"

"Well, in that case, in order to let you get some of your money back, I can see five hundred dollars in them!"

Johnson was about to accept the offer, when a hand reached over his shoulder and seized the jewels, while a voice exclaimed:

"Hold yer hosses, partner! Maybe I kin do a little better than that!"

The speaker was no one else than Old Sly Slater, the self-declared Premier Sleuth.

Jolly Johnson turned upon him angrily.

"Well, I'll swear you've got a cargo of cheek," he declared, evidently not fancying the detective's external appearance. "Give me those jewels!"

"Tut! tut! don't get sassy, young man," was Slater's complacent answer. "I jest want ter appraise the value of these gewgaws, fer I'm a connoissewer in diamonds. I've worn better'n these myself, tho' I do say et. I'll give yer their full value—eight hundred!"

"They're yours," Johnson said, quickly. "Produce your lucre."

Without further remark the Premier thrust the jewelry into one capacious pocket of his trousers, while, from another, he drew a large wad of greenbacks, and counted out the sum of his offer in one-hundred-dollar bills upon the table.

"There ye aire, young man!" he said, "an' ef you've got half ther grit yer dad had before you, you'll sail in and skin the socks off'm the chap w' the pop."

"Have a care, sir, how you refer to me," Hair Trigger cried, scowlingly. "The pop you see here has killed better men than you are. I'm a dead shot, and my name is Hair Trigger."

"Sho! ye don't say," retorted Slater. "Why, gol darn it, Mr. Hairy Trigger, I wouldn't be afeard ter bet ten cents to a tarant'ler, that ye can't hit a sheep's pelt tacked ag'in a barn door! Howsomever, go ahead with yer game, an' if ye beat young Johnson, I'll give ye a chance to show what kind o' a shot ye aire, sure's my name is Old Sly Slater!"

Hair Trigger made no response, and the game recommenced.

However, during the playing, Jolly Johnson turned and addressed Old Sly, who was an interested looker-on.

"Excuse me, sir," Jolly said, "but you made reference to my father. What do you know of him?"

"More than you do yourself, I opine, me boy."

"When did you see him last?"

"Less than a month ago. But go on with your keards. Lots o' time fer you to talk of the old man arter you win back some of the money you've lost."

Jolly nodded, and turned his attention fully to the game.

But ill-fate seemed to hold him in an icy grasp, for he lost pot after pot, until Hair Trigger held the whole eight hundred dollars.

He then arose from the table, with rather a ghastly attempt at a smile, and was about to leave the room, when Old Sly grasped him by the shoulder, and said:

"Hold up, young man! Don't go off an' butt yer brains out. Jest wait a bit, and I'll win your money back for you."

"You will? Pshaw, no one can win against that devil's luck."

"But I kin, ye kno'!" the Premier Sleuth declared. "You jest hold yer hosses, and I'll prove to you that I ain't gassin'."

The uncouth stranger then stepped forward to the table, from which Hair Trigger had not yet risen.

"So you're some on the shute, aire ye, partner?" Old Sly queried.

"None better, with a revolver, around these 'ere parts!" the gambler replied, proudly.

"Thet's sayin' a good deal, by thunder. Kin ye snuff a candle?"

"Ninety-nine times out of a hundred, at forty paces, sir. Have done it!" I've even shot the eye-winkers off a mule, at a hundred yards, and never hurt the mule."

"Phew! That's the biggest lie I've heard since Jonah swallowed the whale. Say, now, supposin' I was to stand at fifty—could ye send a bullet plum through the center of my heart, or in other words the spot where the pulsation is always the strongest?"

"I reckon I could!"

"I'll bet ye can't!"

"What!"

"I say, I bet ye can't put a bullet plum through my heart, in the center. For instance, I will illustrate: I'll take this ace of hearts from the table, and place it upon my breast, underneath my shirt, so that the ace spot rests directly over the pulsating spot of my heart. "I will then button up my shirt, and give you a chance to put a bullet through my heart, at fifty paces, and bet you one thousand dollars against what you won from Jolly Johnson, that you can't do it. In order to win, you must pass the bullet directly through the ace spot in the card, and into my heart. If you lose you must give back to Johnson what you won from him. Now, sir, aire it a bargain, or not?"

"Bah! what are you givin' me?" Hair Trigger growled. "D'ye think ye can stuff me up w' sech a fake that you dare stand the trial?"

"I'm you're man, as soon as ther bet aire settled. I'm a gamecock from Jumpin'-Off Place, and you kin bet I never purposes anything I'm afeard to back up!"

"Well, then, one thing is sure. You've got suthin' besides the card over yer heart, to prevent the bullet from entering it!"

"Nothing. As proof of this, after you have fired, I will expose my breast so you can all see that I neither wear mail, a shield, or any other protection except the ordinary clothing you see on me at the present minnit!"

The crowd which had grown dense, exchanged glances of utter amazement. They were dumfounded, that any man should so foolishly tempt certain death.

Hair Trigger seemed no less astonished than the audience at large.

"And you mean to tell me you mean business, and will bet me one thousand to the three I won from Johnson?" he demanded.

"That you can't put a bullet into my heart through the ace-spot of hearts, yes!"

"Then, I'm your man. Put up your money in Pat Kelly's hands!"

This was immediately done, after which the proprietor ordered that every door and window of the saloon be locked!

CHAPTER III.

THE TERRIBLE TEST—OLD SLY UNMASKED.

NEVER in the history of Red Dog had a more excited assemblage been packed together, than the audience now assembled within the walls of the Jockey Saloon.

While there were plenty who were eager to witness the novel tragedy there were some who were loud in their protests against the act, providing, as he claimed, the Premier detective wore no shield to arrest the deadly bullet.

But, Old Sly Slater only laughed, good-naturedly, and gave orders that the crowd get to either side of the room, leaving a lane and the ends clear.

This was done, and then both the detective and the dead-shot approached the table.

"All is in readiness!" Slater said, coolly, "and there is no use of waiting, or keepin' our aristokratik audience in suspense. There is an ace of hearts. Take it, and make some plain peculiar mark upon it, by which you will know it when you see it again. I will then place the ace spot directly over my heart, measure off twenty paces, and count twenty, whereupon I am to let my upraised hand fall to my side. At this signal, you are to fire. But it is to be understood that you are to treat me honorably, and not attempt to shoot me anywhere else, than directly through the heart!"

"Exactly. I do not seek your life, but, since you have drawn me into the scrape, I mean to see it through, and shall go strictly in accordance with your directions!"

"Very well, sir, that is all I can ask of you!" Sly replied.

Hair Trigger then made a mark upon the ace of spades, after which the detective placed it in his bosom, and buttoned up his shirt.

Bidding Hair Trigger get ready, he then de-

liberately paced off the agreed distance, and turning once more faced, what to the crowd, seemed certain death.

He was entirely self-possessed, and seemed to be devoid of fear.

As for Hair Trigger, he drew and cocked one of his revolvers, and when Sly upraised his arm, the dead-shot of Red Dog took deliberate aim.

He was noted far and wide, as a man of steady nerve, who had made some of the wondrous pistol-shots with which he was accredited.

But, as he faced Old Slater, the keen-eyed ones of the audience noticed that his hand was unsteady, and that fact gave them a thrill of horror!

A strange scene it was—a terrible moment of suspense, during which the crowd scarce drew a breath, for very fear of diverting the attention of the actors in the singular drama.

Then—

The detective's arm dropped quickly to his side!

At almost that instant Hair Trigger fired, and the report of his weapon rung like a knell of doom, through the room.

Every eye centered upon the Premier Sleuth. He was seen to reel and stagger in a vain attempt to keep his equilibrium.

He was seen to thrust his hand into his bosom and draw forth a card, and drop it.

Then he fell like a log to the floor, insensible.

Among the first to reach his side were Jolly Johnson and Hair Trigger.

The former knelt down and tore open the detective's shirt, while the latter picked up the playing-card.

It was the same card he had given the adventurous detective, and, sure enough, the red ace-spot in the center had been punctured by a bullet or some other round instrument.

As for Sly Slater, no bullet had penetrated his breast, at all, the only sign that he had been hit, being a faint red spot directly over the heart.

Nor could any trace be found of any shield or plate that had stayed the force of the bullet.

"Is he dead—is he killed?" were the cries that came in a chorus from the crowd.

"No! he is not hurt at all—only stunned!" replied Jolly Johnson. "Back! Stop crowding around, you fools! Give the man a chance to breathe, and he will soon be all right!"

"But what stopped the bullet?" urged the crowd.

"That's more than I can tell you. There is no sign of mail, shield or plate that could have arrested the ball. The only evidence that the man was hit is a red spot over the heart. Blood, even, has not been drawn, nor is the skin abraded."

"Pshaw! et's all a humbug!" yelled a miner. "Hair Trigger fired a blank cartridge!"

"You're a liar!" cried Hair Trigger, holding the punctured card so all could see it. "I hit the mark plum, and heer's the ticket that proves it!"

While the crowd were staring in amazement at the unmistakable evidence that a bullet really had been fired, Old Sly opened his eyes, and sprung nimbly to his feet, his countenance expanded into a broad grin.

"Whew! that air bullet come nigh makin' me fergit whether I was afoot or on horseback, darn me ef it didn't! Wonder whar the pesky thing went to, anyhow?"

He shook his garments several times, when, lo, and behold! the bullet rolled out of one of his trousers' legs upon the floor.

"Ha! ha! Thar she am, an' not even flattened!" the Premier cried, holding the leaden death-messenger up in plain view between his thumb and forefinger. "Ye see, me gentle galoots, ef thar had been anything but my tough old heart to stop the bullet, et would have been flattened like a pancake. Ah! I see; the keerd here war hit true, sure enuff. Hair Trigger, old socks, you're a corker, and no mistake. Thar's no flies on yer aim. I say, boys, s'pose we all unite in moistening our meat-swallowers."

The crowd gave a cheer, and made a precipitate rush for the bar, to get first place.

It would be a "cold day" indeed, when they refused an invitation to drink.

"Hold up here!" Hair Trigger cried, advancing close to Old Sly, his face clouded with a sullen expression. "I acknowledge that you did as you bragged, and in some way deceived us all. How you did it I don't pretend to know. But, there was some deviltry about it, or you'd be a dead man. There is one thing you have not deceived me in, however, and I think I can prove it to your satisfaction."

"And what is that, pray, my Christian friend?" Sly asked, coolly.

"This!" was the reply, and thrusting his hand quickly forward, Hair Trigger seized hold of the detective's beard, and gave it an upward jerk.

The result was startling.

Off came a false beard, mustache and wig, all combined, and before the astonished crowd stood a young man of not much over twenty-two—a handsome fellow, with a clear-cut, pleasant face, keen and brilliant eyes, a graceful mustache of slight growth, and a closely-cropped head of hair.

It was indeed an unexpected revelation, and so taken aback were the spectators that, for a moment they uttered not a sound.

"By Heaven! it's *Deadwood Dick*!"

Suddenly a voice uttered this cry from somewhere near the entrance to the saloon.

The undisguised young man started violently at sound of the voice, and though evidently much surprised, he quickly found use of his tongue.

"Yes!" he shouted, "I AM *Deadwood Dick* the detective, and I'll give five hundred dollars for the capture of the man who uttered my name!"

The crowd immediately surged toward the door, and then followed a crashing of glass, intermingled with curses and the cry:

"He's escaped!"

The crowd was so dense before him, that it was useless for *Deadwood Dick* to attempt to reach the door.

So he turned to find Jolly Johnson standing by his side.

"Ah! is it you, Johnson? Did you get your money?"

"You bet!" was the reply, "but the possession of it once more is no circumstance to the surprises of this night. By the way, here's your thousand. Thanks, a millions time, for winning mine back, at the peril of your life!"

Dick smiled.

"No peril, at all!" he replied. "In fact, I rather enjoyed the astonishment of the natives."

"Rather risky enjoyment, I should say. And so you are really *Deadwood Dick*?"

"*Deadwood Dick*, Jr., rather. My predecessor is unfortunately dead."

"Exactly. I knew that, and have often heard of you and your exploits. By Jove! I'm glad to know you, for if stories of you are half-way true, you are a fellow after my own heart. But, tell me, how did you contrive to miraculously escape being killed? And tell me, too, about my old dad, whom you seem to know, and whom I have not seen in a long time!"

"Well, if we can get out by the side-door, yonder, we'll go around to my room, at the hotel; we'll then open a bottle of wine, and have a chat. I am glad to have met you, too, for your father commissioned me to find you, and when you know all, it may be you'll find it a matter of choice to double up with me, in a serious undertaking. Come, let's go!"

As they crossed the room, toward the side-door, they passed Hair Trigger, whose dark visage wore an expression of triumph.

"I'll see you, in the morning!" Dick said, significantly, and passed on.

They had no difficulty in making their exit by the side-door.

Dick had been thoughtful enough to bring along his disguise, and when they were outside of the Jockey Saloon he put it on again, in order to be able to go to his room at the hotel, without any questions being asked.

Within five minutes they were comfortably ensconced in Dick's room, with a bottle of wine at their disposal.

"Now, first tell me of the old gent," Jolly urged, after they had lit their pipes.

"That will be the hardest job of all," Dick answered, gravely. "Are you prepared to hear the worst?—to hear a tale of horror that will thrill you with fiercest indignation, and steel your heart with undying desire for bitterest vengeance?"

"Yes! yes!" Johnson said, bowing his head. "I know what you would say. The old man is dead!"

"Yes, Johnson, you have guessed it, and nearly his last words to me were to tell you, should I meet you, that he died game, and it was his hope, that should it be your fate to meet his trials, you would do the same. Now, do not give way, but listen attentively, for what I tell you will fill you more with a desire of revenge than with grief!"

Jolly nodded, and remained silent.

Dick then went on to narrate the main incidents connected with the terrible death of poor

old Job Johnson.* He told of their expedition to Sylvan Lake; of their visit to the island; of their capture by the infamous Owls; of Job's awful death at the whipping-post; and of his—"Dick's"—own rescue, and oath of vengeance. He narrated all the details necessary to give Jolly a full idea of the suffering they had undergone, at the hands of the human fiend, Henry Hastings.

"And this Hastings—what of him?" Jolly asked, huskily.

"Well, I have told you nearly all I can. They escaped and fled. As soon as liberated, I started out upon what I appropriately named '*Deadwood Dick's Death Hunt*,' and not until I have succeeded in running Hastings to earth will that trail end. Within the past few weeks I have fancied I was not far from my foe; intuition taught me so. But, I had no idea that Hastings was in Red Dog!"

"Is he? Is he?" Jolly cried, excitedly, springing to his feet.

"Yes. The voice that cried '*By Heaven! it is Deadwood Dick!*' belonged to no other person than Hank Hastings. That is why I offered the reward for his capture!"

"Then, for heaven's sake, come! Why sit there when we ought to be moving?"

"Sit down. We can do nothing in this dark night. We have no means of knowing where the man is stopping, or what name he goes under. We must wait until morning before we can successfully make a move. Even now he may be miles away, but I doubt it. Finding that I am really after him, he would more naturally set a trap for me, rather than run the risk of my following him to the ends of the earth, as I threatened to do. No fool is Henry Hastings!"

"Maybe not, but it galls my spirit to think we must remain here in idleness when he is very likely making his escape."

"I know how you feel, and can assure you that you feel no worse about the matter than I do! In the morning we will set busily to work, and we will not be long in striking a clew, I fancy. Even if Hastings has succeeded in making his escape, I shall not consider myself baffled, for I have sworn to hound him down to death, and shall do so. I never break my word! Are you with me, Johnson, or do you propose to go it alone?"

"I'm with you, heart and hand!" Jolly replied, emphatically. "We'll pard together at least until vengeance is ours! And, as I have not registered at the hotel, I suppose we might as well bunk in, together."

To this Dick Bristol had no objections, and, accordingly, it was so arranged.

They chatted until a late hour, and were about to retire, when Dick made the discovery that during their conversation, a letter had been tucked in under the door.

He instantly seized and opened it, and what he read was as follows, and caused him an exclamation which brought Jolly quickly to his side.

"RED DOG, May —, 188—.

"MR. SLY SLATER alias }
DEADWOOD DICK: }

"DEAR SIR:—

"Thanks to the exposure of your identity, to-night, I am on my guard, and ere this reaches you I will be far away.

"It was a great surprise to me to learn that you were really alive, and on my trail.

"I supposed and hoped that you were really dead, on the island in Sylvan Lake, but it appears not.

"I have not forgotten your threat to yet live to hunt me down to death, but let me tell you you are on a wild goose chase. I have money, without limit, and I can evade you easily. So you might as well give up all hope of ever capturing me, and go about your own business.

"I could have killed you, easily, before leaving Red Dog, and thus forever rid myself of all danger of pursuit. However, I preferred not to stain my hands again, with human blood.

"But, remember this: I am no angel, and if you persist in following me, I shall be under the necessity of laying a trap for you, that will result in your death. A word to the wise is sufficient.

"Express to the people of Red Dog my kindest appreciation of their—or rather, Alonzo Israel's—contribution toward my future comfort, and should you and I ever meet again, as stokers of the eternal furnace, I trust we meet on friendly terms.

"With best wishes for your personal welfare,

"I remain, my dear sir,

"Yours truly,

"HENRY HASTINGS.

"King of Rogues.

"P. S. Give my sympathetic regards to your newly acquired friend, Johnson."

* See "*Deadwood Dick's Danger Ducks*." Half-Dime Library No. 529.

CHAPTER IV.

OFF ON THE DEATH HUNT.

JOLLY JOHNSON had finished reading the letter, almost as soon as Dick himself, and then the two pards stared at each other inquiringly.

"Well, how's your think?" Dick finally demanded. "Ain't that about the cheekiest communication you ever had the pleasure of perusing?"

"I should say so. It gives me a better insight into the character of the man we have to deal with," Jolly returned. "I reckon he bit the nail on the head when he christened himself '*King of Rogues*,' eh?"

"Right you are. He is a king of rogues, and no mistake about it. And this letter proves that it was he who robbed and murdered the old Jew, Alonzo Israel!"

"Just so. Well, what's to be done?"

"Nothing can be done until morning. Then, we shall have to pick up the trail as best we can. So let's turn in and get some rest, for the death-hunt may be a long and tedious chase."

Securely locking their door, and closing the transom over it, they retired for the night.

Dick was not long in falling asleep, but, not so with Jolly, for it was long past midnight ere he fell off into a doze.

Dick slept soundly, but just how long he had slept, he could not tell, when he was suddenly aroused by a yell, and sat bold upright in bed.

"What in thunder's the matter?" he demanded, rubbing his eyes, after which he perceived Jolly was out of bed, and pacing the floor, excitedly.

The candle, which had not been extinguished, dimly lit up the scene.

"Come! come! what's the matter?" Dick repeated. "Have you got the jim-jams, Jolly, or what ails you? Who the blazes uttered that unearthly yell?"

"Guess it was me!" Jolly replied, with chattering teeth. "What I saw was enough to make any one yell, after being woke out of a sleep!"

"What did you see? Explain yourself!"

"Do you see yonder?" and Jolly pointed to the transom over the door which was wide open.

Dick sprang out of bed with an exclamation.

"Well, what of it?" he demanded.

"Enough!" Jolly growled. "I was aroused from my slumber by a noise, and looking toward the transom, I saw it was open, and a man's head was protruding into the room, as was a man's hand, which clutched a revolver. And, such a face! It wore the most diabolical and revengeful expression that one's mind could conceive!"

"I was so startled that I could not repress a yell, at which the face and revolver disappeared. Jerusalem! If I had not awakened as I did, one or maybe both of us would have been murdered!"

"A lucky thing, then, that you did awaken!" Dick said, grimly. "Do you think you would recognize the face, if you were to see it again?"

"I did recognize it!"

"The deuce you did!"

"Yes. It was the face of one of the men I was playing poker with to-night!"

"Which one? Hair Trigger?"

"No. The man whom they called Abram Audley!"

"Phew!" and Dick gave vent to a prolonged whistle. "I had a vague suspicion I had met that man somewhere else than in Red Dog; and now, I am sure of it!"

"How do you mean?"

"I mean that the man you just saw was none other than our mutual foe in disguise."

"Henry Hastings?"

"Henry Hastings."

"What causes you to think that?"

"Intuition, combined with the fact that I hated the man from the first time I saw him today in the hotel. Intuition rarely fails me."

"Well, what's to be done?"

"We will dress and go down-stairs, and see if any such man as Henry Hastings or Abram Audley is registered here."

They lost no time in dressing, and, glancing at his watch, Dick saw that it was the darkest hour before the dawn—three o'clock.

They went down-stairs, and found the hotel office open, and superintended by a sleepy clerk.

"We would like to look at your register," Dick said, "to see if you have a man stopping here named Abram Audley."

"The gentleman has been stopping here for a few days, but has just left," the clerk replied.

"How long ago?"

"About ten or fifteen minutes, I reckon."

"How did he go?"

"On horseback."

"Did he say where he was going?"

"No. I asked him where he was off for so early, and he told me it was none of my business, adding that he should probably be back here again, 'when the flowers bloomed in the spring time, tra-la-la!' That settled me."

"Did you notice whether he went alone or not?"

"He was accompanied by a veiled lady, whom he registered as his daughter."

Dick turned to the page where the arch villain had registered, and there found the name of

"ABRAM DUDLEY & DAUGHTER,
San Francisco."

"Did you notice which route they took?" Dick asked of the clerk.

"No; I paid no further attention to them, after they left the office, though it struck me they were in a mighty hurry to get off."

As there was nothing more to be learned of the clerk, Dick and Jolly went out on the piazza.

It had been raining during the night, and the darkness was intense.

"We can't do any more till it's lighter," Dick said. "I'd like to know what trail they took on leaving Red Dog, for we might be able to over-haul them before they got far."

"You are satisfied, then, that Abram Audley is really Henry Hastings?"

"Beyond the shadow of a doubt."

"But who is the veiled woman the clerk mentioned?"

"A woman of mystery, who accompanies Hastings wherever he goes. She is known as Sylvan, and is, in some strange way, so firmly held in his power that she dares not break away from him!"

"They were registered as from San Francisco; perhaps they have started for there?"

"Nix! They would be more likely to go in an opposite direction, to throw me off scent!"

Daylight at last came, and as soon as it did, the two man-hunters examined the ground in front of the Arizona Hotel, from which point three trails branched off in different directions.

But, there were numerous horse-tracks leading in each direction, and there was no means of telling which way Audley had gone.

As soon as he could find the hotel proprietor, Dick made known his profession, and a few of the particulars of his search for Audley, and requested permission to inspect the rooms the Audley party had occupied.

This was granted, and Dick and Jolly proceeded to examine the apartments.

That which Sylvan had evidently occupied, was neat and tidy, but not so with the other room. Everything was tumbled about in confusion, and the floor was littered with scraps of paper.

These Dick submitted to a critical examination, but made nothing out of them.

While he was thus engaged, Jolly found a rudely sketched map of New Mexico and Arizona, with trails, towns, a few important camps and the railroad systems marked out by pencil.

At Red Dog, a star was made with a red pencil, and at Yucca, on the Atlantic and Pacific R. R., a trail in a somewhat zig-zag fashion, was outlined with red pencil, with figures on either side as if denoting the distances.

Dick studied this over for awhile, and then arose.

"You were right!" he said.

"How do you mean?" queried Jolly.

"Why, in this respect. Our game had started from here for Yucca, on the A. & P. route. From there, without a doubt, they intend to strike for 'Frisco. No time must be lost. The chase must now begin, with a vim!"

"Right you are!" Jolly declared. "The sooner we're off the better I will be suited!"

Before they could start, an outfit had to be procured, consisting of good horses, blankets, trappings, rifles, ammunition and provender, and so much time was consumed in perfecting these preparations, that it was high noon ere they were ready to start, as they were about to do when the landlord handed Dick a letter, which had been left at the office, he stated, by a stranger.

Eagerly Dick opened it.

"It was written in a masterly hand, and was to the point.

It ran as follows:

"DEADWOOD DICK:—Your preparations to follow the Hastingses, have been watched, and I warn you not to attempt to do it. If you do, you will only run yourselves into the jaws of death.

"I am one who is in position to know, and give you this as a friendly warning.

"BLACKTHORN."

Dick laughed defiantly, as he tore the note into bits, and driving the spurs into their horses, he and Jolly rode away, bound for Yucca!

CHAPTER V.

A QUIET CAPTURE.

SOME days later, after a rapid but tedious journey, we find our two friends in Yucca.

Yucca is an odd little place, on the Atlantic and Pacific Railroad, and although for the most part its people are civilized, a great many who lounge about the camp are not civilized—half-breeds, lazy red-skins, and equally worthless white loafers.

Until the railroad went through, the camp did not amount to a pinch of snuff; but, after that advent, the town soon became quite a sizable village.

When Dick and Jolly reached the place, they put up at the most respectable-looking of the town hotels, and being pretty well fagged out, they first regaled themselves with a substantial dinner and then took a nap, from which they awoke greatly refreshed, and prepared for business.

They first took a look over the town to "size up" it and its inhabitants, and the impression formed, was not very favorable, for they were eyed curiously by the loungers about the street, who all seemed to regard Dick and Jolly, who were well dressed, with genuine envy or distrust.

"I reckon this is not the sort of camp Hank Hastings would care to stay in, for any length of time," Dick remarked, as he and Jolly sauntered back toward the hotel. "These mugs lounging around the corners, are none too good to do any kind of mischief, you can bet, and they all stand in together!"

"Shouldn't wonder if you were right," Jolly assented. "I don't think I should care to stop over night here, myself, with any amount of money about me."

"Well, we'll make inquiries of the hotel man, and if we can't find out anything from him we'll tackle the station agent. It may be that Hastings arrived here in time to catch a train, and did not seek a hotel, at all."

"And, it may be they did not come to Yucca at all!" Jolly suggested, dubiously. "I've felt we were on a wild goose chase, all along, but said nothing."

"On the contrary, I am perfectly satisfied that we are on the right trail," Dick declared. "It won't take us long to find out, at all events."

They first examined the hotel register, but found no one registered answering to the description of father and daughter, or man and wife.

In fact, the two man-hunters were the only ones whose names had been entered upon the books for several days.

The hotel proprietor was next questioned, but he was gruff, and knew nothing of any parties having arrived in Yucca, answering to the description of Hastings or Sylvan.

Then the friends visited the railway station, which they found in charge of a genial individual, named Sykes, who, in answer to Dick's interrogation, responded:

"Yes, sir; the parties you inquire for purchased tickets and left by the last train, which passed here at nine A. M."

"Where did they purchase their tickets for?" Sykes hesitated a moment before answering.

"I don't know that I have a right to answer that question," he said finally, "since I was requested not to give any information on the matter."

"Indeed? Well, sir, I shall have to demand a truthful answer," Dick said, coolly.

"By what right do you make the demand?" Sykes asked, uneasily.

"By this right!" Dick replied, exhibiting his detective-badge. "I am an officer of the law, and it is your duty to give me such information as you possess. These people were fugitives from justice, and for you to try to cover their trail would make you as good as their accomplice."

"Oh! certainly. I understand that. The man bought four tickets, two of which were for Albuquerque, and two for 'Frisco."

"He took the train for 'Frisco?"

"Yes. The train does not stop here, except on signal. He paid me twenty dollars to signal the train, and fifty additional to say that he and his companion had gone to Albuquerque."

"What is the next principal stop to the westward?"

"Barstow."

"Might he not have stopped off there, in order to catch a train for Albuquerque?"

"Possibly. I am inclined to think, however, that they were headed for 'Frisco."

"When does the next west-bound train stop, or rather, pass here?"

"At midnight."

"Very well. Thank you, for your information," and Dick and Jolly went back to the hotel and seated themselves upon the piazza.

"Well, we're distanced, so far," Dick confessed. "Our game will reach 'Frisco a long time ahead of us, that's sure. All we can do, at present, is to sit and suck our thumbs."

"Yes. Hastings holds the winning hand, so far," Jolly assented. "I have my doubts if we ever overtake the cuss."

"Pshaw! Never give up that way. We've only fairly begun the chase. Wait till we get to 'Frisco, and we will have a better opportunity to play our cards."

"I hope so. I haven't much relish for staying in this place, till midnight, even. It's a tough gang of citizens we are surrounded by."

"No doubt about that, but if we mind our P's and Q's, and have nothing to say to them, I allow we will come out all right."

The remainder of the day dragged away, slowly, and at last the shades of night enveloped the town.

During the afternoon Dick made some inquiries of the hotel proprietor in regard to who constituted the ruling element of the town, and was informed that there were two factions, so far as the "tough" element was concerned—one being headed by Booze Bill, and the other by Ginger Green.

He also learned that Booze Bill's gang was much the superior in numbers and fighting qualifications, having "licked" the opposition crowd several times.

A quiet idea had struck the ingenious detective, and he proceeded to put it into execution.

He had Booze Bill pointed out, and leaving Jolly, walked over to where William was leaning against the side of a cabin.

"How d'ye do?" ventured the stranger.

"Are you the illustrious chaw'em-up, whom they call Booze Bill, around these parts?"

"Waal, I allow that's jest who I am!" was the reply. "Who are you, an' what d'ye want wi' me—fight?"

"Nixce fight!" Dick replied, quickly. "Do I look like a pilgrim as could stand up before a modern slug-master like you? Well, I guess not; excuse me. I am a stanch friend and admirer of men of your physical prowess, however, and I thought I'd come over and see if you didn't want to buy a couple of horses, cheap? Me and my pardner take to the railroad, from here, and as we can't take our horses along, I wanted to see if I couldn't sell 'em."

"Can't sell 'em to me!" William growled. "I haven't even got the price of a drink."

"Sho! you don't say! Why, come up to the hotel, and we'll have a smile. I ain't very well heeled, myself, but can't see a feller go hungry for a drink."

As a matter of course, Booze Bill made no objections to this invitation, and he and Dick sauntered away toward the hotel.

"Reckon you'll have a mighty hard time o' disposin' uv yer hosses, in this camp," Bill observed. "Money's about es skeerce here as gold-eagles on a dead man's eyes!"

"So I should judge. I suppose you could find use for the horses, tho', if you had 'em?"

"Waal, I reckon. I could supply the railroad with ties, and make a good livin'!"

"Jest so. Well, I'll tell you what I'll do. I don't like the looks of that other gang of fellers, headed by Ginger Green, and bein's we're strangers, I suspect they're planning some mischief against us. I don't want to get into trouble, and if you and your gang will stand in solid for us, we'll give you our horses, free gratis!"

"By thunder, it's a bargain!" Booze Bill declared, heartily, at the same time thrusting forth his horny hand. "I see you're the clear quill, and ef thet Green gang attempts to molest you, we'll pitch into 'em, and make 'em feel mighty sick, you can bet! When d'ye purpose to take the train?"

"At midnight, to-night!"

"Allright! We'll see that ye git a good send-off, me boyee!"

Dick accordingly "set 'em up" for the ruffian leader, several times, after which that worthy hurried away to the bosom of his gang, with a quart bottle of whisky under each arm, to acquaint them of his new equine acquisitions.

"I think I have obviated all danger for the present," Dick said when he had communicated his arrangements to young Johnson. "Booze Bill and his gang will stand in with us, in case the other faction makes any attempt to molest us."

Shortly after, they sought the room that had

been assigned them, in order to make some necessary preparations for their trip to San Francisco, and while so engaged, Dick chanced to slip his hand into the side-pocket of his coat, when to his unutterable surprise, he found that it contained a letter, which proved to be sealed, and directed to himself!

How came it there?

That was certainly a mystery, for Dick was positive it was not there a couple of hours before.

"Well, this beats my time," he muttered.

"Have you been playing a joke on me, Jolly?"

"Nary a joke," Jolly assured. "I didn't put the letter in your pocket, and don't know who did. Open it."

Deadwood Dick did so, and uttered an exclamation of astonishment, as he read the following:

"Fools that you are, *keep on*, and you will come to an untimely ending of your career, as I predicted."

"BLACKTHORN."

"The deuce! *that* chap is then, indeed, on our trail," Dick exclaimed. "Unknown to us, he must be constantly near us, watching for a chance to strike us the fatal blow."

"But who is Blackthorn?" growled Jolly.

"You know just as much about it as I do," Dick confessed. "For my part, I haven't the least idea who he is, except that he is most likely some villain detailed by Hastings to watch and follow us, until the right chance comes to put us out of the way. We must keep a sharper outlook for the fellow, and nail him, if we catch him dogging us."

About ten minutes later there came a knock upon the door, upon opening which, Dick found the landlord standing outside.

"S'cuse me, sir," the host said, rather apologetically, "but *thar's* a man down-stairs who wants to see ye."

"A man to see me?" echoed Dick. "What is his name?"

"Dunno, sir. He didn't say. An odd-lookin' old jigger, tho', who said he wanted to see Deadwood Dick. I told him there wasn't no sech party here, but he argued there was, and said you sometimes signed yourself Richard Bristol. Then I recognized who yer was, an' come up to tell you."

"I'll bet it's my old side partner, Old Avalanche," Dick said, addressing Jolly. "He has a great habit of turning up when and where least expected. Come, we will go down and see if it is the old terror."

They accordingly hurried down-stairs, the landlord bringing up the rear.

As they emerged from the stairway into the office, they suddenly found themselves surrounded by a dozen ruffians, all of whom grasped cocked revolvers, which were leveled at the two man-hunters.

"Throw up your hands, or we'll riddle ye!" came the authoritative command, and seeing no way out of the dilemma, as resistance was plainly useless, Dick and Jolly obeyed.

Their feet were then quickly bound, and their wrists pinioned behind their backs, and they were prisoners, as neatly captured as any one could wish.

Dick made no resistance, nor uttered any protestation whatever, until he was bound, when he turned fiercely upon the leader of the gang, who was the burly ruffian, Ginger Green, and consequently the rival of Bill Boozel.

CHAPTER VI.

LYNCHED!

"Now, sir!" Dick cried, sternly, "I want to know the cause of this outrage—why you have made us prisoners, when we have done nothing whatever to merit such an act?"

"Oh! ye hain't done nothin', hey?" roared Green, with a snort. "Waal, now, we ruther opine ye have, me pair of bucks, an' you've got ter take the consequences. I'm Ginger Green, ther constable o' this heer town, ef ye want to know it, an' you kin bet I don't let no bloody crimes go unpunished around this precinct!"

"Bloody crimes?" echoed Deadwood Dick.

"What do you mean? I don't comprehend!"

"Ye don't, hey? Waal, we *do*. Ye'r a pair o' murderers an' robbers, an' ther speerit o' Johnny Sykes calls fer vengeance. Judge Lynch never showed his virtues on this town before; but, by the eternal, he shall have an airing to-night!"

"What do you mean, sir, by charging us with being robbers and murderers?" Dick demanded, fiercely.

"'Cause ye aire!" vociferated Green. "Ye went to ther depot an' murdered Johnny Sykes, the station-agent, an' robbed the place of what

money there was. An' now, we're goin' ter invite ye to a lynch picnic. Eh, boys?"

"Ay! ay!" came the stentorian answer.

"This is false—infernally false!" cried Dick, his anger at boiling point. "Neither myself nor companion has any knowledge of the crime you mention, nor are we in the least guilty of any wrong-doing, since coming to this camp. In the name of the law, sir, I demand that we be released at once!"

"In ther name o' ther law, hey?"

"Yes, in the name of the law! I am a United States detective, and this accusation on your part is both preposterous, and a gross insult!"

"Can't help what you say; ye can't close my eye up, fer a cent. One of ye killed Johnny Sykes, an' we're goin' ter lynch the both o' ye, in order ter hit the right party. 'Tain't no use o' yer tryin' ter lie out o' ther job, fer et won't help yer case a whit. Johnny Sykes lays over in the station, wi' his throat cut from ear ter ear, an' one o' you two cusses did ther job. I see'd ye when ye come ter town, an' at once sot down on yer as pesky bad characters. Sez I ter ther boys, 'I'll keep my eyes on them fellers an' see what deviltry they're up to.' And so I did."

"I see'd you two cusses go ter the depot, but didn't spect ye war up to murder, an' didn't know nothin' about the crime till a bit ago, when a feller come and told me that he had seen ye commit ther crime, and all about et!"

"This is all a diabolical lie, and a plot to get rid of us!" Dick cried, by this time fairly frenzied with rage. "Show me the man who makes this infamous charge, that I may mark him down in my memory, for if I ever get free, oh! but *won't* I make him suffer for this accursed falsehood!"

"You'll never git free—needn't trouble yourself about that, in the least!" Ginger declared, grimly. "Heer's the feller that see'd yer commit ther crime. He didn't dare tell of it at first, for fear he would be suspected, but finally concluded to make a clean breast of it, and 'betray you into the hands of justice!'"

As the constable finished speaking, a man stepped forward. He was a medium-sized individual, fairly well dressed, and wore a sweeping black beard, and long, shaggy hair of the same hue.

Little of his face could be seen, except around the eyes, for a slouch hat was pulled down over his forehead.

There was much about his general appearance that was sinister and suspicious to Dick's keen apprehension.

He stared coolly at Deadwood Dick with his peering little eyes, his arms folded across his breast.

"So you're the wretch who has lied to these people, in accusing me and my companions of a crime we never had a hand in, are you?" Dick demanded.

"I am the man who, by mere accident, saw you, sir, individually, commit a cold-blooded murder," was the cool reply.

"It's false! You are a diabolical liar, curse you!"

"Nothing of the sort. I know nothing of you, nor would I have any object in preferring a false charge against you."

"Of course not," chimed in Ginger Green. "Tell the boys here how ye come to witness the murder."

"Well, there's not much to tell. I came up the railroad afoot from Powell to-day, and had just reached the end of your depot, when my attention was attracted by loud and angry words on the inside, followed by a sound like some heavy object falling on the floor. Suspecting all was not right, I stole to a window, and peered in, and at what I saw I was literally horror-struck, for, lying upon the floor, in a pool of blood, was a young man, with his throat cut, while, bending over him, was another young man, grasping an ugly-looking knife, from which the blood was dripping. A third man was rifling the safe of money and papers."

"I was so horrified at what I saw, that I slunk away, and secreted myself in a clump of bushes, where I could think the matter over without being seen. At first I did not know what to do. I knew I was a total stranger in the camp, and was afraid if I made known the tragedy, the crime would be laid to me. It took a great deal of deliberation before I finally came to the conclusion to make a clean breast of the matter to the constable."

"And do you dare, sir, to state that either I or my companion were in any way connected with the murder?" Dick demanded, endeavoring to burst asunder the cords that bound his wrists together.

"I do mean to say just that," the alleged witness to the crime answered. "Without perjuring myself, I can solemnly swear that you are the man I saw bending over the prostrate man with the reeking knife in your grasp, while your companion is the same person who was rifling the safe."

"What a hellish lie!" Dick exclaimed. "Your name, liar, that I may never forget you!"

"Well, if you want to keep me fresh in your memory, my name is Harry Suydam," the man replied.

"Then hear me swear, Harry Suydam, *alias* Satan, that, just so sure as I ever get free, I'll have your life in payment for this wrong you have done me! Do you hear?"

"I hear," Suydam smiled, "but your threat is of no account, for you're going to pay the penalty of your crime ere this night passes, or you can call me a liar!"

"That remains to be seen!" Dick retorted, grimly. "I am a Government officer, and if any harm comes to me, the people of this town will wish they had never been born! Another thing, sir, let me tell you: I am not the least deceived in you. It was *you* who murdered the station-agent, in order to get me into trouble, and you are the sneaking cur who has been sending me threatening messages, under the name of Blackthorn. You are a murderer, and the cringing tool of the King of Rascals, Henry Hastings!"

Suydam started, but uttered a harsh, discordant laugh.

"Oh! well!" he said, "it don't matter who I am, so far as *you* are concerned. I saw you commit the murder, and if these people whose prisoner you are, don't make a move, pretty soon, to string you up, I'll take the liberty of shooting you, myself!"

"No ye don't!" spoke up Ginger Green. "We're goin' ter conduct this heer funeral ourselves, an' don't want no furin' interference. Boys, two or three o' ye go an' build a bonfire near the big oak tree, so as to light up the scene, an' some one else get a couple o' lariats long enough an' strong enough for the purpose they're to be used for!"

Several of the crowd hurried away, after which the others regaled themselves at the bar, keeping a good watch that the prisoners did not escape, which it was impossible for them to do, as their feet were too tightly bound together to prevent their walking.

"Well! things look mighty dangerous!" Jolly concluded. "Do you suppose they really mean to hang us?"

"That is their intention, without a doubt!" Dick responded; "but, don't give up, in despair. I have hopes Booze Bill will come to our aid when he learns what is going on. If not, why our chances are slim. I've faced death more times than ten, and always escaped, and I can't believe my luck has deserted me yet. However, if worst comes to worst, why we can do no less than die game!"

"Right you are. I too have hopes of a rescue," Jolly assured.

In five minutes a man entered the hotel with two lassoes, and one end of each of these was made into a slipping noose, and shirred about the prisoners' necks.

The other men soon came in and announced that the bonfire was started.

"Hurrah! Then all's in readiness for the execution—ther first neck-tie party ever held in Yucca! Come! carry ther prisoners to the tree, boyees, an' all as wants to shall have a pull at the rope!" cried Green.

The men gave a cheer, at this, and the prisoners were seized bodily, and carried from the hotel.

Not far away stood a big oak tree, with wide-spreading branches, near which a bonfire blazed brightly, lighting up that part of the settlement.

To this tree the prisoners were borne, and once more stood upon their feet.

The disengaged ends of the lariats were then tossed over a strong limb, and when they fell on the other side, were seized by a dozen pairs of hands, and drawn taut.

All was thus in readiness for the execution.

"Now, then, ye murderin' villains, I allow ye begin to comprehend what sort of a predicament yer heartless crime has fetched ye to!" Ginger Green said, confronting the prisoners. "Hev ye got anything to say, before ye'r launched into eternity?"

"Nothing, except that we are innocent of the crime we are charged with!" Dick replied, "and if we are lynched, a most unjust double murder is on your heads, and our dying curse will follow you through life!"

"Bah! What do we care for your curse!" replied Green. "It's like chaff on the wind. If you've got any prayers ter ask, or any messages ter leave, yer'd better be quick about et, for I shall give the boys ther signal to pull, in a couple of minutes!"

Dick had turned to Jolly, who had grown very pale.

"Cheer up, pard," he said. "I reckon it's all up wi' us; but remember how game your poor old father was, and don't let it be said that his son broke the record!"

Jolly nodded, slowly, but made no reply.

Dick then turned fiercely upon Harry Suydam, who stood near at hand.

"As for you, you inhuman, lying wretch!" he cried, "you are a fit associate for the man you work for, and I suppose it will be a source of great gratification to you to see two innocent victims of your diabolical lies meet an untimely and unnatural death. But, you shall see us die like men, without an outcry!"

Suydam shrugged his shoulders, and smiled, disagreeably, but made no reply. He turned, however, and said something to Green, in an undertone.

The latter at once drew his knife, and severed the bonds that confined the prisoners' feet.

"Thar!" he said, with a grim chuckle. "Ef ye won't squeal, I'll guarantee you'll show us what ye kin do, in the kicking line!"

Then turning to his ruffianly companions, he said:

"Get ready, boys! When I count three, up they go!"

There was an instant of breathless silence, then—

"One!"

A brief pause, followed by—

"Two!"

Both Dick and young Johnson were very pale, but upon either face was an expression of great firmness and undying resolve.

"THREE!"

A wild yell burst from the lips of the ruffians, and the two prisoners were drawn up into mid-air, suspended and dangling by their necks.

Shall we draw the curtain?

No! for the scene is not yet ended.

Hark!

There is a roaring of rifle-shots, a whizzing of bullets, and the ropes suspending the prisoners are severed just above their heads, and they drop upon their feet, while several of the ruffians fall, mortally wounded.

On dropping upon their feet, Dick and Jolly seemed moved by one thought, for realizing that their feet were free, they fled, of one accord into the darkness.

For them, it had indeed been a narrow escape!

CHAPTER VII.

IN 'FRISCO—PICKING UP THE TRAIL.

SIDE by side the escaped man-hunters ran, until at least two miles separated them from the village of Yucca, when they slackened up to a walk, for both were pretty well winded.

They had taken the railroad track as their route, and having a solid footing underneath them, had been able to cover the distance, in a comparatively short space of time.

Neither spoke a word, until they slackened their speed, when Jolly Johnson drew a long breath of relief.

"By gee-whittaker! but that *was* a narrow escape from death!" he exclaimed.

"You're a-shoutin', now!" Dick assented, with a shrug of the shoulders. "I thought myself that we were ticketed through for the next world! That fellow, Booze Bill, was as good as his word, anyhow, and the sacrifice of our horses, to him, was the means of saving our lives."

"Yes, I guess you are right. But, what are we to do, now? How are we to get our hands free?"

"By turning our backs to each other, we can, no doubt, manage to untie one or the other's bonds. We can try it, at all events!"

The plan was put into execution, and worked admirably, for in a brief time the friends had the use of their hands, once more.

"I suppose there is nothing left for us to do but trudge along the railroad until we are overtaken by the midnight train, which can't be far away, now!" Dick said, as they resumed their journey. "It's lucky they did not rob us of our money, and concealed weapons."

"You're right. Do you think the train will stop for us?"

"I don't know, I shall signal it, at all events, and if they don't stop, why, we'll have to tramp on until we strike some other station, where we can get a ticket for to-morrow's train!"

Shortly after midnight they heard the Express train approaching, and with a lighted torch made out of an old newspaper, Dick made a frantic endeavor to signal the train; but his signals were unheeded, and the engine and cars shot past, and the roar of the wheels upon the iron rails soon died away in the distance.

"Well, that's mean, I'm blamed if it ain't!" Dick growled. "All there is for us to do, is to travel by shank's team."

The prospect was not encouraging, to say the best.

The stations on the railroad, were few and far between, and there was no telling when they would strike a place where trains stopped, regularly.

It was late the next afternoon, when they arrived at Powell's Station, to learn that only the forenoon train, (which had passed them) stopped at that point.

They were also informed they would have to go on to the Needles, where westward trains stopped for meals, if they wished to get through tickets for 'Frisco.

So, after a brief rest, they purchased a couple of Indian ponies, and set out for The Needles.

We will pass over the tedious journey, as it was unattended by any incident worthy of special mention.

Early the next morning, they reached the wild forest town known as The Needles, and, just in time, too, to catch the morning train for Barstow, whence they ran straight through to San Francisco.

When they arrived in the city of the Golden Gates, they were, as may be surmised, pretty well tired out, but, despite this fact, they took no time for rest, but began an immediate and systematic canvass of the hotel registers of the city.

In only one instance did they find an entry upon the registers that attracted their special notice.

This was at a second-rate hotel, on Bush street, where "Doctor Jas. Dixey and daughter," were registered.

Inquiry, however, revealed the fact that Dixey and daughter had only remained over one night, and had taken their departure the following morning.

The two detectives then tried the banks, and inquired if Henry Hastings was known at any of them.

Yes, several of the banks were acquainted with Mr. Hastings, but not recently, nor could they tell whether he was in the city or not.

The last bank visited, panned out better than the rest, although Dick had to show his badge before he could obtain any courtesy or information.

"Yes, we are acquainted with Mr. Hastings, and have been for a number of years," one of the directors said.

"Has he been here, lately?" Dick asked.

"Yes. He dropped in as soon as the bank was open, yesterday, and drew out the balance of his account with us, saying that his health was poor, and that he intended to travel."

"Did he say whither he was bound?"

"I believe he mentioned something about visiting Australia!"

"How much money did he draw on you for?"

"Some ten thousand dollars."

"Was there a woman with him, when he came?"

"I think not, although he may have had a companion, waiting in the hack, outside."

"Does Hastings own any property, here, in San Francisco?"

"I think not, at present."

"Do you think he is in town, yet, or could you direct me to any one who would be able to give me more definite data concerning his movements?"

"Well, no, I don't know of any one who could give you better information than I have given you. Providing he had nothing to delay him, I should presume he sailed on the steamer that started yesterday for Melbourne!"

So, as there was nothing more to learn in that direction, Dick and Jolly left the bank.

"We're not off the trail by any means, yet!" Dick declared. "If they've gone to Australia, why, we will follow them by the next boat."

They were sauntering along one of the principal streets, discussing plans for the future, when Dick stopped stock-still, and uttered an exclamation!

"Why, what's the matter?" queried Jolly.

"Matter! Why you've heard me speak of Nick, the negro, who was with your father and me, at Sylvan Lake?"

"Yes."

"Well, do you see *that*, over yonder?" and he pointed across the street, where a dudishly-attired colored man was walking along some distance in advance of them—strutting along as importantly as though he were some great monarch.

"Yes, I see him!" Jolly assented. "What of it?"

"That is the same chap who was with us on Sylvan Island, and who escaped the dogs."

"Indeed! Why don't you go speak to him?"

"Come! we will. I wonder what he's doing here in 'Frisco in all those gaudy togs? Looks as if he'd struck it rich quite recently."

They crossed the street, and hurrying forward, soon overhauled the colored gent, whereupon Dick clapped his hand familiarly upon his shoulder.

"Hello, Nick, old boy!" he cried. "What in the world brings you out here in 'Frisco?"

Nicodemus Noodle, for it was indeed he, wheeled abruptly and surveyed the two man-hunters, with a haughty stare.

He was dressed in an elegant suit of clothes, with silk hat and patent-leather shoes to correspond, in addition to which he wore a costly diamond ring and scarf-pin, and carried a masive gold-headed cane.

In fact, though decidedly homely in face, he was a stylish a looking "coon" as one could wish to see.

But not the slightest trace of recognition was expressed upon his black face as he faced the man-hunters.

"Beg parding, sah, but I guess you hab made a mistake!" he said in answer to Dick's hearty salutation.

"Well, I guess *not*!" Dick declared. "What sort of a game are you trying to give us, anyhow? You're Nicodemus Noodle, who was with me and Old Job Johnson over in Oregon at Sylvan Lake."

"Deed, sah, but you're pow'ful in de wrong, sah. Nebber in Oregon in all my life, sah, nor my name ain't Nicodemus Noodle, either."

"What in thunder is your name, then?"

"My name is Charles Augustus Rufus Sukey, sah, at your service. I am a gentleman of leisure."

"Yes, you look it!" Dick replied. "But it so happens, Mr. Sukey, that you can't shut my eye up, for a cent. I'd know you if I was to meet you at the equator. Come, now, tell the truth and shame the devil. You're Nick Noodle."

"No, sah. You're dead wrong, fo' shuah."

"But, I say *no*! All your protestations cannot convince me to the contrary. Why, look at that half decapitated ear of yours. The island bloodhounds did that the night you escaped from the Owls. Oh! you know *me*, Nick, me boy, and there's no use of your denying it."

"I don't kno' no sich a thing. Dat is a un-trufe, sah. I don't kno' nuffin' 'bout no bloodhounds, nor no nuffin' 'bout you. Nebber see'd youh befo'h in my life. Howebber, you'se 'spishus characters, an' ef you don' g'long off, an' luff dis colored gentleman alone, he'll call a policeman, and hab you both arrested."

Then, turning, Nicodemus strode haughtily away, leaving the two man-hunters staring after him.

"Well, may I be kicked to death with mules if that don't take the cake!" Dick ejaculated, scratching his head, and both looking and feeling decidedly nonplused.

"Guess you made a mistake, didn't you?" Jolly inquired.

"Certainly not!" was the quick response. "That black chap is the same coon who, was with your father and me at Sylvan Lake. No power on earth could convince me to the contrary, so positive I am!"

"Then, why the denial?"

"That's a question. There is certainly some reason for it."

"Perhaps he doesn't want to recognize you, because he's togged up so gay. Some of these darks are mighty big feeling when they've got good clothes on their backs!"

"Yes, but vonder nigger has a stronger reason than that. His being here and his stubborn denial, arouses a suspicion in my mind that he is some way connected with our Hastings case."

"Pshaw!"

"Oh! I may be wrong, but it behooves us to investigate every clew, thoroughly, for you know we've got a shrewd fish to angle after. Now, I'll go down along the harbor front, and find what steamships have left here recently, and who were their passengers. In the mean time you were to dog the footsteps of yonder coon and see where he goes to. Here is a set of false whiskers. Put them on as soon as you have an opportunity, and above all, don't lose sight

of the nigger. If you learn anything worth knowing, report to the Grand Pacific at supper time."

The pard detectives then separated, Dick turning down a side street, toward the harbor.

He first visited the offices of several Australian steamship lines, but learned that only one ship had sailed, the day previous, that being bound for the port of Melbourne.

The passenger list was placed at his disposal for inspection, and there he found registered, "Doctor Jas. Dixey and daughter."

"That settles that!" he muttered. "Hastings and Sylvan have gone to Australia, and again I am baffled. But, it won't be for long!"

In leaving the Australian piers, he found out by overhearing a conversation between two longshoremen, that a steamer of the Pacific Mail Line had left 'Frisco for New York, the preceding day.

This aroused the detective at once, and he visited that office, and asked to see the passenger list.

Greatly to his surprise, he found registered there, the names as follows:

"H. Henry Hastings,
Miss Letha La Verde,
San Francisco."

"For New York."

"Well, that knocks my other calculations silly," Dick mused. "I don't know what to make of it. I have felt confident that the Doctor Dixey was my man. But, it appears not. Hum! hum! I must reflect over this matter."

By inquiry, he found that no steamer would start for New York for several days; so he went back to the hotel, to await the result of Jolly Johnson's investigations.

Finally, as Johnson did not put in an appearance, Dick once more sought the hotel where "Dixey and daughter" had been registered. Calling the landlord aside, and making known his profession, he requested a personal description of Dixey and his companion.

"Oh, they were ordinary-looking people," was the reply. "The only particular thing I noticed about 'em was that the gal was darnation good-looking, and the man had red whiskers. It rather struck me, however, that the whiskers didn't sprout out of his own hide. But, of course, it wa'n't none of my business, you know, and so I didn't say nothin'."

Dick went back to the hotel in deep thought.

"Hastings and Dixey were one and the same party, without a doubt," he decided. "But how is it that Hastings sailed for New York and Dixey for Australia? By Jove! there's some crookedness here, after all, and I'm half inclined to believe that these steamship registrations were a blind to throw me off the track, and that Hastings is still here in 'Frisco. He could well afford to expend a couple of hundred dollars to send me on a false trail!"

When he reached the hotel he was handed a telegram, which proved to be from Johnson, and read as follows:

"Have traced party to fine suburban residence, No. —, — street. It appears he belongs there."
"JOLLY."

CHAPTER VIII.

TRAPPED.

THERE was nothing in the telegram that impressed Deadwood Dick as being of any considerable importance, so he shoved it carelessly into his pocket and lounged around the hotel, awaiting Jolly's return.

But the afternoon wore away, and no Jolly put in an appearance.

After supper Dick grew really impatient.

"Confound it, I wonder what is keeping him so long? Can it be he has stumbled upon some important clue, and is seeking to run it out? If so, ten to one he will get himself into a trap, for he hasn't cut out for much of a success in the detective line."

Remembering that they would most likely need some clever disguises, he concluded to make an evening shopping tour, trusting by the time he returned to find Johnson at the hotel.

He was gone some three hours, and in that time succeeded in making several excellent purchases of disguises.

Among other things, he hired a room near the hotel, and had these disguises taken there, so that he could there transfigure himself without any one being the wiser for it.

He then returned to the hotel, quite satisfied with his evening's work, but not satisfied to learn that Johnson had not put in an appearance.

It was already ten o'clock, and Dick could see

no reason why his partner should not have returned long before.

Eleven o'clock came, and then twelve!

But no Jolly.

Dick was seriously alarmed by this time, and hiring a cab, he directed the driver to drive him to No. —, — street, to drive slowly past the place, and then turn around and fetch him back to the city.

This was done.

When the cab, after passing through many beautiful streets, neared its destination, the driver called Dick's attention to the house he wished to see.

It proved to be a large modern villa set down upon a beautiful, liberally-shaded, sloping lawn, surrounded by a fine hedge.

In the rear were stables and other outbuildings, and a glance showed that it was the home of a man who possessed good taste, combined with wealth.

The house was dark and silent, the occupants probably being in bed.

Two large dogs lounging upon the piazza were the only signs of life about the premises.

The presence of the dogs alone satisfied Dick that Jolly was not loafing around the premises, so he ordered the caddy to drive him back to the hotel.

He scarcely expected that he would find young Johnson there, and consequently was not disappointed when he did not.

As little could be done before morning, he finally retired for the remainder of the night; but his brain was too active for sleep, and as soon as it came daylight he arose and dressed.

After breakfast he set about forming plans, and concluded to pay another visit to the vicinity of the villa, where Jolly seemed to have mysteriously disappeared.

"For," Dick concluded, "I am certain that Jolly's visit to the vicinity of that house has had something to do with the disappearance."

According to the room he had engaged, and very effectively "made up" for a new character.

When he reappeared upon the street, he was clad in a red shirt, dirty blue overalls, and brogans, with a ragged felt hat upon his head. He also wore a reddish wig, and a pair of whiskers to match, of the "Galway sluggers" order, and these, together with his mustache cropped close, and a few dextrous touches of a penciling brush, gave him the appearance of a genuine "Mike," just over.

Another thing in his favor—he was a good mimic of the various dialects.

He started for the suburbs at once, carrying a pick and shovel upon his shoulder, and no one would have suspected but what he was an ordinary day laborer.

In due time he came in sight of his destination.

The villa and its grounds looked doubly attractive by daylight, and it was indeed a beautiful home, one of many such in the far-away Western metropolis.

A stone sidewalk ran along the outside of the hedge, leading to an archway, where there were two iron gates.

When he reached this point he found a hired man fastening a silver-plated name-plate to the gate, while an old man, on the inside, was looking on, and superintending the job.

Engraved upon the plate, was the name:

"DR. D. JAMES."

The man on the other side of the gate possessed rather a large figure, but was evidently over sixty years of age.

His face was bearded nearly to his eyes, and both his hair and beard, were snowy white.

He was dressed in an old-fashioned broadcloth suit, with a plug hat to match, and supported himself with the aid of a hook-top cane.

As he reached the gate, Dick stopped and watched the labors of the hired man with what was meant to represent idle curiosity, at the same time whistling a few notes of an Irish jig.

"Well, sir, what do you want?" inquired the old man, in a deep, resonant voice, which, it occurred to Dick, was ill befitting to his age.

"Phat do I want, is it?" returned Dick. "Faith, it's nothin' I want, 'cept it be wurruk, whisky, an' money. I was jist afther watchin' the mon, there, that's all."

"Do you work around here, sir?"

"Howly mothers, no. It's jist arrived from Australia I am, an' sthartin' for the country in search of wurruk!"

"Well, it is commendable that you are ambitious to get work, instead of loafing around the city, in idleness."

"It's not so much the ambition phat's trouble me, sir, as the imptiness ov my stoomick. Bedad, ye wouldn't b'lave it, at all, but it's been twice twenty-four hours, since I had a bite to eat!"

"Indeed? Well, that's bad. What is your name, and what can you do, sir?"

"What is my name? Well, sir, I reckon it's Dennis O'Killegin, at yer service; an' as fer 'phat can I do? bedad, I kin ate, sleep an' drink!"

"No doubt, no doubt of that, sir. But, you look like an able-bodied fellow, capable of work, if you are only watched. I want a good fellow to mind the lawn and garden, and perhaps you would fill the bill. How much do you expect a day, sir?"

"Two dollars a day, sir, wid conditions, yer honor."

"Two dollars a day? Nonsense! A dollar is all I can pay!"

"All right! Shure, I'd jist as lief worruk for a dollar a day, as for two, providin' the conditions are all right."

"What conditions do you refer to?"

"Well, sir, in the first place, where do I ate, in the dinin'-room, wid de family, or with the cook?"

"In the kitchen, of course!"

"An' who be the cook—a Sweed, a nagur, or a Eyetalian?"

"Neither! She is Irish, like yourself!"

"Arrah! that's the kind! I'll have a mash forinst her, the first day, before breakfast. An' where do I slape, sir?"

"With my negro valet!"

"Phat! me shlope wid the loikes av a nagur? Niver, sir, niver! Yez kin kape your job, sir. I don't moind sleepin' wid the pigs, sir, on a pinch, but wid a nagur or an Eyetalian—niver! niver!"

"Oh! well, then you can sleep on a blanket in the hay loft, over the stable. How will that suit you?"

"Shure, that'll do."

"Come in, then, and I'll show you what to do."

Dick obeyed, and was conducted to the rear of the villa, where he was set to work hoeing in the garden.

"Remember, you are not to approach the house without you're summoned," were among the last orders given him, as the old man turned and hobbled away.

And Dick went to work; but it was odd business to him, being the first time he had wielded an agricultural implement in many years.

"I don't think I'll farm it more than the day out," he muttered. "Somehow, it's a little out of my line, and I can't see as I'm goin' to find out anything about Jolly while I'm working here."

The carriage and horse-barn were only a little way off, and in the doorway, during the entire day, sat an ill-favored looking fellow, who was probably either coachman or stableman.

He was dark-complexioned, with black eyes, hair and mustache, and an ugly expression of countenance that added to his unfavorable appearance.

All day long he sat upon a stool in the doorway, and watched "Dennis" at his labors, except on several occasions when Doctor James came out and conversed with him.

That their conversation was relative to himself, Dick felt certain, and it caused many strange thoughts to enter his mind.

"It's possible that the old man is Hastings in disguise," he muttered, "but, if he is, his disguise is most perfect, and he is an admirable actor. On the whole, I'm not inclined to believe that he is Hastings. It don't seem to me the rascal, with so many crimes on his head, would dare settle down here in 'Frisco. But, what bothers me is, what has become of Jolly?"

Before leaving the hotel he had left a note there for Jolly, so that he would get it, in case he should return during Dick's absence, and know where Dick had gone.

At noon the cook brought Dick out a bowl of bread and milk, and informed him that that was all he would get until supper-time.

There being over a quart of the lacteal fluid, however, and a plentiful supply of bread, Dennis O'Killegin had no fault to find.

By five in the afternoon he had the entire garden hoed over in good shape.

Then the stable hand motioned for him to approach.

"Well, Pat, you've done well," he said, in a cordial tone. "and you needn't do any more to-day, except I want you to help me get some oats out the bin pretty soon. Pretty tired, eh?"

"Faith, an' I am that!" Dick replied. "Oh! well, you'll have a soft snap hereafter. You're the sort as will suit the old man. He's a cranky sort of a fellow, but, once ye git on the right side of him, he's a good man to work for, and will give you all you're worth."

"Does he own this illigant place?" Dick inquired, with all apparent earnestness. "You bet, and lots more besides. He's rich as Croesus, they say."

"Got any childhren?" "Nary chick nor child—no one but himself, an' the hired help."

"Faith, an' did yez see a well-dressed young man up this way, yesterday, a-lookin' for a job?" Dick inquired.

"No. There was no one around here inquiren' for work."

They chatted awhile longer, and then the stableman said:

"I've got to get some oats out of the granary, for the horses, and if you'll help me fill a couple of bags, I'll give ye a cigar, and some prime old wine I snuck out of the cellar. I stand in with the cook, an' it's a cold day when I get left for what I want to drink."

Accordingly, they entered the main barn, a gloomy looking place. In one corner, was a great bin, some eight feet square, by six in height, and built of planks.

The top was covered by a heavy door, which could be raised with the aid of a pulley and rope.

After the stableman, who gave his name as Jack Hurd, had raised the lid, he said:

"Give me your foot, now, and I'll boost you into the bin. You'll find a half-bushel measure there, and you can hand me out the oats, while I fill the bags!"

"I don't know about that, begorra!" Dick replied. "How am I to get out of the bin, shure, when I get in it?"

"Pooh! that's easy enough. The bin's half full of oats, and you can get out easier than you can get in. Be careful, tho'. There's a bottle of wine in one corner. Hand it out first."

Not doubting but what all was right, Dick gave his foot to Hurd, and was boosted to a sitting position, on the upper edge of the bin.

The interior of the bin was dark, and Dick was deliberating whether or not he better jump into it, when he received a violent push that sent him tumbling down into the big box, and even as he fell he heard the door of the bin slam down, and he knew he was trapped.

Down! down! he went, not to the level of the barn floor, but clear to the basement, bottom, where he landed square upon his feet.

A prisoner was he, once more, and there rushed upon him the unpleasant realization that not only was he once more in the toils, but at the mercy of his bitterest enemy, Henry Hastings!

For that Doctor James and Hastings were one and the same persons, there was no longer a reason to doubt.

And that Jack Hurd was Blackthorn, seemed equally probable.

Was this, at last, to be his tomb?

Dick was wondering this, when he was startled by a voice, close at hand!

CHAPTER IX. OUT AND OFF.

LITTLE wonder Dick was startled at the sound of the voice, when, surrounded by the most impenetrable gloom, he had little expectation of hearing a voice so close at hand.

"Well! who are you?" was the demand.

Dick uttered an exclamation of astonishment, for he recognized the voice.

"Good heaven, is that you, Jolly?" he ejaculated.

"You bet! Is it you, Dick?"

"You can copper your cards it is!"

"Are you bound?"

"Nary bind!"

"Then, strike a match, if you've got one, and release me of these ropes!"

Dick, fortunately, had a good supply of matches, and soon, by aid of a brief light, had his pard free of the bonds.

"How in the blazes do you come here?" Jolly demanded, grasping his friend warmly by the hand.

"You tell me, first, how *you* come to be here, and then I'll tell you my experience."

"Well, it won't take long to tell you what I know about it!" Jolly laughed. "I tracked the nigger as far as the villa, without discovery, as I supposed. Just then I encountered a messenger boy, and sent you a telegram, as I concluded to hang around the neighborhood for awhile, in hopes I could secure some further points. After a while, I got so blamed thirsty

that I couldn't stand it any longer, and ventured as far as the back door of the villa, and asked for a drink of water.

"It was a rash thing to do, I know, but I was so dry that I was nearly choking. The boss of the house was in the kitchen—a gray-bearded old cuss—and after sizing me up pretty sharp, he gave me a colored goblet, and told me to go wrastle the pump."

"Not suspecting any mischief, I went and did so. The water was deliciously cool, and I drank two glasses. I know I did this, and that is all I do know. When I returned to consciousness, I found myself in this dismal pen, bound hand and foot. What sort of a place is it, anyhow?"

"I allow it was originally built for a granary," Dick replied, "but there don't seem to be any grain in it now—not even grains of common sense, or else I wouldn't be here."

He then went on and narrated his experiences, since he last had seen Jolly.

"Well, we're in a bad way," the latter confessed. "Light some matches, and let's see what our chances are of getting out."

This was done, and a hasty examination of the place was made. The sides of the bin were built of matched, two-inch plank, and the corners were mortised.

The floor was of heavy flag-stone.

The door or lid at the top of the granary, was fully sixteen feet above the bottom.

There was also a small door at the bottom, but this was securely fastened on the outside.

Plainly, they were in a prison of extraordinary strength.

There was a ventilator at the top which let in a meager supply of air.

"Well," Dick said, when the matches had gone out, "I've got into a good many scrapes, but none where I more deserved to be kicked than in the present instance. If I'd had the sense of a catfish I'd have known I was venturing into a trap. But, here we are, and I don't see as there is any use of crying over spilt milk!"

"Then, you don't see any chance of our getting out?"

"There is only one chance that I can see!" Dick replied.

"And, what is that?"

"Dig out—cut our way out, with our knives!"

"I have no knife. Mine was taken from me, as was the jewelry you sold me back and what money I had!"

"That's bad!" Dick said. "However, I have a couple of thousand dollars about me, and that will carry us a good ways if we succeed in making our escape. But, it will take a good while to cut a hole of sufficient size to admit of our getting out."

"That's so. But, that seems our only salvation. Do you think Hastings will vacate the villa?"

"Yes. What I am afraid of is that he will take the boat which leaves for Australia, tomorrow, at four o'clock. If it is in our power, we must escape from here before that time."

"Then, let's set to work at once. We will take turns at the work so as to progress fast. Is your knife sharp?"

"You bet. I never carry dull tools, except those that bark and bite!"

Dick accordingly set to work, with a will, at cutting his way out.

He soon had made enough splinters so that Jolly built a little fire out of them, on the stone bottom. This produced enough light to see to work by.

For hours the two men took turns at working, and, at last, had one wide plank cut in two.

Another similar cut, and the dismembered portion of the plank could be forced outward, without much trouble.

"So, after a short rest, the work was resumed, the chips and splinters serving to keep the tiny fire a-going; and several hours later the other slit was cut across the hard plank."

Then, both Dick and Jolly united in giving the disconnected piece a fearful kick, and were rewarded by seeing the plank go flying out into the basement, leaving a large aperture through which the two friends at once crawled out of the bin, into the basement.

Here another difficulty was encountered.

The doors of the basement were locked.

It did not, take long, however, for Dick to pry off the fastenings and soon after, they escaped from the barn, and were free!

Consulting his watch, he found they had been all night and the better part of the day, in effecting their escape.

It was already two o'clock, P. M!

As Dick had predicted, the villa was locked,

and the shutters tightly closed, and there were no signs of life, about the premises.

"They've gone, you bet!" Dick averred, "and, ten to one they're now on board the Australian steamship; so, no time is to be lost!"

"You're right!" Jolly replied. "If they get away this time, we shall indeed be baffled!"

They hastened to the nearest street car, and started for Dick's disguise room.

When they reached this, they disguised themselves—Dick as a U. S. lieutenant, regular army, with uniform, blonde wig, side-whiskers, and heavy mustache; while Jolly made up as the officer's colored servant. Each character was well taken, each outfit was complete in every detail, and secure as a disguise.

Dick made a dashing-looking lieutenant, while Jolly's make-up as an African gent was perfectly natural.

When they were all fixed, and the other disguises had been hurried into a large sachel, the two man-hunters started, post haste, for the steamship dock.

When they reached the steamship office, a great disappointment greeted the two avengers.

The second Australian steamer of the week had left a half hour before, and was now only dimly visible to the naked eye, far down the harbor, owing to a slight fog.

Hastily looking over the passenger list, Dick found "Henry Hastings" and "Letha Love" registered as among the passengers.

"They've gone!" he said, to Jolly, "but not so far yet, to escape our vengeance. Let's see if we can't hire a tug, to run down and overtake them?"

A search was hastily made.

And at last one man was found, who agreed to put them aboard the Gallant, for one hundred and fifty dollars.

Dick quickly accepted the offer, and while the tug was getting ready, he purchased tickets to Melbourne, for Jolly and himself.

In half an hour, they were off.

The tug was called the Daisy, and deserved the name, for it sped through the waters at a rapid rate of speed, and soon San Francisco began to grow dim in the distance.

Then, as night settled down, the city disappeared from view altogether.

Luckily the moon came up, full and bright, and lit up the dancing waves with beautiful effect.

It was after midnight ere the Gallant was overtaken, and Dick and Jolly received on board.

There were few other than the crew on deck, and the majority of the passengers were none the wiser for the arrival of the young man-hunters.

Down in his state-room, Henry Hastings would not have slept so undisturbedly, it is probable, if he had known that his two sworn and deadly enemies were so near at hand.

Dick and Jolly were assigned a state-room together, and not long they remained out of their bunks, for both were greatly fatigued.

They could but congratulate each other, however, that they had succeeded in thus far outwitting their enemy, after all.

CHAPTER X.

THE VERY MAN AND WOMAN.

It is perhaps unnecessary for us to say that both Dick and Jolly slept soundly; and when they awoke the next morning, dressed, and went on deck, they felt greatly refreshed.

The Gallant was well out to sea, by this time, and although the morning was clear and sunny, the American shore was only faintly visible in the distance.

The Gallant was one of the largest steamships plying on Western waters, and had been especially built, and admirably equipped for the accommodation of an extensive passenger traffic.

Everywhere about the vessel scrupulous cleanliness was a noticeable feature, while the majority of the crew were sturdy, good-looking fellows, who seemed to take a pride in keeping themselves looking respectable.

As yet, neither Dick nor Jolly had experienced the least feeling of sea-sickness, although they found several miserable-looking passengers on deck, who had evidently been contributing their "quota" of experience to the care of the sad sea waves.

Neither Dick nor Jolly had ever been on salt water before, and they thoroughly enjoyed the change.

"Well, here we are!" Dick said, as they seated themselves on the lee side of the ship, "bound for a strange land we know nothing about."

"We're too far out, I reckon, to wade ashore, if we wanted to go back!"

"I should say so," Jolly replied. "As for me, I'm in no hurry to go back, I've always yearned for an ocean trip, but hardly expected such an opportunity as this would come to hand. Vengeance and pleasure, don't generally travel hand in hand. I wonder when we shall see our enemy?"

"Hard to say. He may keep to his room the entire voyage. This is not probable, however, for I believe he is positive he has successfully eluded us, and that we are even now prisoners in the granary, back in 'Frisco. If he is satisfied he is safe beyond our reach, he will no doubt be on deck to-day."

"I hope so. I want to be able to draw one sure bead on the inhuman wretch, and that will settle him."

"No, no, you must not seek to satisfy your revenge, yet awhile," Dick protested, decisively. "You must wait until you are on shore. Remember we are on board a steamship, now, and if you were to use a weapon you would be put in irons for the remainder of the voyage, and eventually be turned over to the Australian authorities!"

"Then, must we remain idle, all the way, when my very spirit cries for vengeance?" Jolly cried half angrily.

"That's what we must do!" was Deadwood Dick's reply.

"But, I tell you it is impossible. Do you suppose I can live through this journey and know that the man who put my father to such a terrible death, is within reach of my avenging hand? No, sir! I'll have his life, if I die for it the next instant!"

"Well, I have warned you!" Dick said, sternly, "and now, I command you to make no attempt on Hastings's life, before we are on Australian soil. If you are wise, you will heed me!"

"You command me, sir?" cried Jolly, angrily. "By what right, or power, do you command me, I'd like to know? I am my own master, I'll have you know, sir."

"That may all be, but I would prevent you from committing an act, while aboard this boat, for which you would be the greatest sufferer, in the long run."

"You'd prevent me, would you? Well, just let me tell you that you *can't* do it! I'm not bound to obey your wishes, and if I see fit to kill the murderer of my father, I shall do so!"

"Oh, well, do as you please, then!" Dick said, his own anger rising. "If you're fool enough to attempt so rash an act, you forfeit my friendship, and if you get into trouble, you must take the consequences, and not depend upon me to help you out."

"A fig for your friendship, and that for your assistance!" Jolly cried, snapping his thumb and forefinger, contemptuously.

He then arose, and stalked away to the fore part of the ship.

Dick gazed after him with rather an anxious smile.

"I do believe the fellow is out of his head," he mused. "I hope to goodness he won't be foolish enough to create any disturbance on board, for if he does, it will only be the worse for both of us."

Trusting Jolly would soon get over his huff, Dick paid no more attention to him, but went below, and got his breakfast.

Afterward, he procured a book from the ship's library, and went up on deck again, where he seated himself in a shady place, and spent the forenoon in smoking and reading.

The day was a most beautiful one, with a soft breeze and sky of azure blue, and the water being very smooth, the steamship plowed along at a good rate of speed.

Toward noon, the ship's captain, a genial-looking fellow, approached the "lieutenant."

"How's this?" he asked, pleasantly. "Your servant has requested that he shall be transferred to steerage passage. I thought before doing so, I'd come and speak to you about it, sir."

"Thank you," Dick said. "Jasper does get a little cranky once in a while over a trifle. Certainly, if he prefers the steerage to my stateroom, let him have his choice. I dare say he will be glad to come back again, in due time."

"You can rest assured of that," the captain replied, with a laugh, "for among the steerage passengers there are no less than sixteen mothers with squalling babies, en route for Sydney."

He turned away then, chuckling to himself.

"I think Jolly is getting the worst of it," Dick smiled, as he resumed reading.

Early in the afternoon, Hastings came on deck.

He was no longer in disguise, and though his face was smoothly shaven, Dick knew him in an instant.

He was dressed in a plain broadcloth suit, and carried a gold-headed cane.

His face was pale and somewhat haggard, and there was a hunted look about his eyes.

After strolling about the deck for a while and scrutinizing the passengers, he took a seat not far from Dick, whom he regarded inquiringly.

Directly he moved a few seats nearer.

"Going to Australia, sir?" he inquired.

"I am," Dick replied.

"You belong to the U. S. Army, I take it?"

"Well, no, not any longer. I am from New York, and bound for the interior of Australia, where I have extensive mining interests!"

"Ah! just so. I suppose New York is a great city, from what I have heard?"

"It is *the* city of the world, in my estimation. Ever been there?"

"No, but, after visiting Australia and London, I think of going there. I suppose a man of means would find plenty of opportunities to start into a profitable business there?"

"Oh! certainly. A man with money can make money there."

Dick then picked up his book and resumed reading, as a hint that he did not want to converse any longer, and Hastings evidently took the hint, for he arose and walked away.

Soon after, he went below, and that was the last Dick saw of him that day.

Night came on—a night just warm enough to be pleasant, and such passengers as were not sea-sick, thronged upon deck.

But, Henry Hastings was not among them.

Deadwood Dick eagerly scanned the faces of those near him, but saw no one he knew—until a woman, dressed in black, and wearing a heavy crape veil, came and sat down within a few feet of him.

Then, a strange thrill passed through him, and his heart beat faster.

Could it be—was it indeed Sylvan, whom he last had seen on the island in Sylvan Lake, Southern Oregon, when she had kissed him good-by, and told him that she loved him?

The strange sensation caused by this veiled woman's proximity to him, compelled him to believe that she it was indeed!

Her graceful figure and small white hands were like Sylvan's, but her face—he could not see that on account of the veil.

Both were seated in the stern of the boat, and there were but few in the vicinity.

The lady paid no attention to Dick, but gazed silently toward the American shores, now lost to view in the distance.

Dick watched her, and once or twice fancied he saw her give a sigh.

"Blame me if I know whether to speak to her or not," he mused. "I am almost certain it is Sylvan, but, if it should not be, I'd be in a deuce of a fix!"

He hesitated for some time, weighing carefully what would probably be the result should he make a blunder.

At last, however, he decided to run the risk, and uttered, in a low tone, the single word:

"Sylvan!"

He saw her start violently, and turn her face toward him.

Evidently she was gazing at him through the meshes of her veil.

Then, she leaned forward, toward him.

"Did you address me, sir?" she inquired, in a slightly unsteady voice.

"I believe I did," Dick replied. "You are Lady Sylvan, of the Sylvan Island?"

"How do you know?" was the quick interrogatory. "Who are you? I have never met you before!"

"Oh! yes you have. Not long ago we parted under very extraordinary circumstances!"

She started, violently.

"What! you—you are not Mr. Bristol?"

"The very identical Richard!"

"Thank Heaven! They told me you were dead!"

"Who told you?"

"He did. You know who I mean!"

There was a silence of a few seconds; then Sylvan quickly arose.

"I must not be seen talking with you," she said. "He would kill me. I will go below and see if it is safe for me to be up here!"

"You will come back?"

"If possible. If not, I will see you at another time!"

She turned then, and glided away.

Dick watched her until she had disappeared, and then turned his gaze once more out upon the beautiful, tranquil, moonlit ocean.

"A human enigma! A woman of mystery, and yet, tho' faithful to a demon, she loves me!" was the thought that kept passing through his mind.

CHAPTER XI.

SYLVAN'S STORY.

SYLVAN came back rather sooner than Dick had expected, and drew her camp-stool up close to his.

"I guess all is safe for the present," she said, throwing back her veil, and revealing to his admiring gaze, her fair, beautiful face, lit up gloriously by the rival effects of the moonlight, and her lustrous brown eyes. "He has been drinking hard all the day, and is now sleeping off the effects of his debauch!"

"You refer to Hastings?" Dick asked.

"Yes."

"Where are the negro and Blackthorn?"

"They are in the forward part of the boat, as steerage passengers!"

"You are bound for Melbourne, eh?"

"I suppose so. Oh! Mr. Bristol, are you going to kill him?"

"Well, that's rather a hard question to answer," Dick replied. "So far as I am concerned, I do not propose to molest him, as long as we are on board this ship, no matter what I may do afterward. But, I am not the only avenger on board."

"No? Who else is there?"

"Jolly Johnson, son of Old Job, whom Hastings whipped to death. Jolly has sworn to avenge his father's death, and I sha'n't be surprised if he does it, before we touch land. If he does, it will take the responsibility off my shoulders."

"Then, if he is to be killed at all, I hope Johnson will do the job!" Sylvan said, "although I should prefer that the crime be left undone!"

"Why so?"

"Because murder is a terrible thing!"

"Very true! But the killing of that infernal wretch could scarcely be called murder. It should be better termed a well-deserved retribution. Look at the black record of this king of rogues, as it pleases him to style himself. If ever a man deserved hanging, he does."

"But, why not arrest him, and let the law deal with him?"

"Justice is too tardy. You seem to take somewhat of an interest in his welfare?"

"No, I do not, in the least. How much I loathe and abhor the very presence of the man no one can ever know. Still, my very soul revolts at the thought of murder!"

"You would rather continue under this mysterious bondage, than have Henry Hastings killed?"

"Rather than have him killed by *you*—yes!"

"Sylvan?"

"Mr. Bristol?"

"Do you remember when we last met, that you told me that you loved me?"

And Dick took her fair white hands in his own.

"Yes! I did tell you so, and—"

"Did you tell me the truth?"

"I don't know as I had any reason for telling an untruth!" was the frank response, while a pretty rose tint stole into her cheeks. "I never expected to see you again in this world, or perhaps I should not have spoken as I did."

"You promised me, too, Sylvan, that, if ever we were to meet again, you would lay before me the story of your life, thus clearing away the mystery that surrounds you."

"Yes, I know I did, but it was in a weak moment I did so. I beg, sir, that you will not press me to comply with my promise."

"Why not?"

"For good reasons; what I would have to tell you would be better left untold!"

"I do not see how that is."

"Maybe not. But, if you were to hear all, you would turn away from me, and despise me, and then!—then, I should be indeed without a friend on the face of the earth!" she said, burying her face in her hands.

"Sylvan, do not say that. Nothing you could tell me of your past could change my respect for you, for I full well realize that you are martyring yourself to a terrible thralldom, rather than tell of the cause of your suffering. Confide in me, and I'll stand by you!"

"Will you? Oh! you are so good that I am almost afraid to sit here, in your presence, lest I contaminate you! But, I will tell you my story, and will try to steel myself to bear the scorn you will have for me, after you have heard it."

"The particulars I have to give you, of my early life, are very meager, and not interesting."

I was found in the streets of San Francisco, when a toddling infant, by an old rag-picker, named Paro Patch.

"No one knew me, nor did any one ever claim me, and so Paro, miser though he was, adopted me as his own.

"He reared me after his own style of living, and what little education I got, other than by bitter experience, I picked up on the streets, or at night-schools.

"When I reached the age of fourteen, ragged though I was, I was voted good-looking, and had numbers of would-be beaux. By this time Old Paro was getting too old to pick rags, and as I had higher ideas, I started a newspaper stand on a street corner. It paid, too, for all the young men patronized me liberally, and I did a thriving business.

"Among others who became my patrons, was a well-to-do broker, named Henry Hastings. He was old enough to be my father, but was stylish, and nice looking. He seemed to be attracted by my good looks, and sometimes bought all my papers, in addition to which he sometimes gave me little sums of money, and trinkets.

"Unsuspecting of his evil designs, I grew to think a good deal of him.

"One day, after supplying me with good clothes, he induced me to go carriage-riding. During that ride, he told me that Old Paro had an immense fortune concealed in the hovel where we lived, and he told me if I would help him to secure that fortune, he would give me half, we to clope together, get married, and go to the great city of New York, and there live in the greatest magnificence, with servants, horses and carriages, and everything that mortal heart could desire.

"I think the villain had me under a spell, for what, with all the grand pictures portrayed by him, I had not the power to resist him, and promised to become a partner to his schemes.

"He, the devil, or some other evil spirit, had possession of me, for when he ordered, I obeyed, like a well-trained servant.

"When he gave me what he said was a strong sleeping potion, I put it in Old Paro's tea, one evening, as Hastings had directed; then, with my evil genius, after the old miser was asleep, we ransacked the hovel together.

"We looked everywhere, but found nothing, and Hastings went away, in a towering rage. Oh! was I not glad, when he was gone, that we had found no money? Indeed I was! What a good girl I would be, in the future, I said to myself.

"But, my joy was destined to turn to uttermost horror and grief, for when, after I had put things to rights, I tried to arouse Paro, I discovered that I was a murderess! The old man was stone dead, and fearfully distorted and swollen.

"Good God! I can never get that awful scene from my memory. I saw the result of my folly, and realized the awful position I was placed in, and that my only salvation was to fly, and seek concealment among strangers. I did not seem to realize, though, that such a course would fasten the evidence all the stronger against me.

"I had managed to save up a few dollars, and with this to aid me, I fled to San Diego, where I procured a situation at housework. It was not long, however, ere I was found by Henry Hastings, who came, armed with papers containing offers of five hundred dollars for my capture, and also a personal description of me. Of course, I was nearly crazed by this, and Hastings pretended to manifest great sympathy for me, and after making brags of all the riches he possessed, declared his love for me, and offered to marry me, assuring me he would protect me from the long-reaching arm of the law.

"Being only fifteen years old, I naturally refused, but when he threatened to give me up to the law, I knew that I had but one choice, and I consented."

"What? you really married that wretch?" Dick exclaimed.

"Yes, I did! It was my only chance to evade the gallows; for in those days, the laws of Frisco were more unmerciful to criminals than now.

"Well, we were no more than married when I was informed by Hastings that, forever after, I could consider myself his slave and menial, and that if I dared to disobey him in the slightest, he would unhesitatingly hand me over to the hangman. He also told me that it had been discovered that old Paro's fortune was in a San Francisco bank, together with the last will and testament, which made me heiress to all his wealth when I should become twenty-one.

"Well, we traveled through the different Ter-

ritories until over a year and a half ago, when the counterfeiting plant was established on Sylvan Lake Island, and I was forced to play the role of queen. That is all. I have told you everything, except the torture and abuse I have undergone. I could scarcely find words adequate to express what I have suffered, both mentally and physically. I know you will despise, abhor me, but I cannot help it!"

"Far from it, Sylvan. I have all along believed you to be the victim of circumstances over which you had no control, and now I know it; and realizing how you have suffered and martyred yourself, my respect for you has only increased."

"Oh! bless you for those words!" she said, in a husky tone, while tears glistened in her eyes. "I never knew what it was to have a true friend before, except in you and old Paro. I feel so happy!"

"I hope far greater happiness may be in store for you in the future," Dick said, gently pressing her hands in his. "For I swear that, ere a month passes over our heads, this yoke that binds you to Henry Hastings shall be rent asunder!"

"Ay, more: you shall be vindicated of all blame for the death of Paro Patch, and stand forth before the world a free and innocent woman!"

"Oh! that it could only be as you say! But it cannot—no, no! it can never be!"

"It can be! Before Henry Hastings meets his doom, he shall make reparation for the great wrong he has done you by clearing you of all guilt. To this I swear; and then, and only then, will Deadwood Dick's Death Hunt be at an end!"

"Oh! thank you! thank you, sir! If it were only in my power to repay you for your kindness!"

"Speak not of payment now. At another time, under different circumstances, I may claim my reward!" Dick replied, drawing her quickly to him, and imprinting a kiss upon her forehead. "But you have not told me what your name is."

"How am I to do so, when I do not even know myself what my real name is, nor who my parents were? Paro named me Polly Patch!"

"Well, I'll call you Sylvan, which is much prettier. When are you of age?"

"Two months from to-day."

"Will Hastings, or rather, would he if living, return to Frisco and claim your fortune?"

"I presume so."

"Well, you can rest easy that he will never set foot in California again. When any one presents a claim for the Patch fortune, it shall be you!"

They conversed a short time longer, then Sylvan went below decks, one of the happiest women on the great ship Gallant.

CHAPTER XII.

"A MAN OVERBOARD!"

THE next day, was a duplicate of the preceding one, with lovely sunny sky, and a brisk breeze that filled the sails of the Gallant, and caused her to scud along like a thing of life, increasing upon the speed furnished by the great engines.

Dick was up, during the early morning hours, and after a hearty breakfast, went upon deck.

During the forenoon, he sent for Jolly, who, after some delay, made his appearance.

"Well, what do you want?" he demanded, surlily.

"Sit down, and I will tell you!" Dick replied.

After Jolly became seated, Dick went on and related his interview with Sylvan, and the story she had told him, concerning her life.

"Now, you see!" Dick said, in conclusion, "it is necessary that a paper should be forced from Hastings, vindicating Sylvan from all responsibility for Paro's death, before a blow is struck. Were you to kill Hastings, before this paper can be obtained, the stain of guilt must always necessarily rest upon Sylvan's name, nor can she come into possession of her fortune. Understand?"

Jolly nodded.

"Yes. But, how do you expect to get such a paper?"

"Leave that to my ingenuity. Promise to make no attempt upon Hastings's life and I will give you then free privilege of avenging your father's murder, and will explain to you how I propose to do the wind-up of the game!"

"Certainly I promise. I have already reconsidered my intention of killing Hastings, while on board the Gallant, and I hope you will

forgive me for flaring up, the way I did, yesterday."

"Of course I will. I knew you would think better of it, when you had time to consider. Now, I'll tell you my plans: I have had a talk already, with Hastings, and I am satisfied he does not recognize me in this disguise, nor suspect who I am. I am aware that he is fond of gambling, and before this boat touches at Melbourne, I propose to win away every dollar the villain has, so that, when he arrives in port, he will be penniless, with starvation staring him in the face. It will then be impossible for him to escape from the city, and, as a result, I shall corner him, and at the pistol's point, demand from him the paper exonerating Sylvan from all guilt, with the proviso that, if he makes a clean confession, according to my directions, I will forego my threat upon his life, and cease to pursue him. I think he will jump at the opportunity. After I am through with him, you can have your chance!"

"Very well! That suits me," Jolly assented, "and you can bet I shall be very near at hand, too, when you are through with him!"

Thus the two young men once more were on amicable terms.

It was hard on to noon when Hastings came on deck. He was dim eyed, and haggard, and looked as though he had had a tough time of it, during the night.

Not long after he came up, Dick sauntered over to where he was standing.

"Good-morning!" the 'lieutenant' saluted, pleasantly. "Have a cigar?"

"Thanks!" accepting it.

"You look a little blue this fine morning," Dick continued. "Had a touch of seasickness?"

"No, I haven't, though more's the wonder, for I'm not at home on the water. These sea voyages are confoundingly monotonous, when there's nothing to amuse one's self with, except to sit and stare at the everlasting waste of waters. Would you believe it, I made a canvas of the whole gents' cabin, and couldn't scare up a man to play a game of poker; couldn't even find one with gumption enough to tackle me at eucher."

"Indeed! There must be a pious crowd on board."

"Well, I should say so. Do you ever play, sir?"

"Oh! once in a while I dip in a little, when there is anything worth while to play for. I'm not a successful player, but I argue if a fellow don't enjoy himself as he goes along he loses the best half of living."

"Yes, that's so—that's so. What do you say, lieutenant, if we try a few hands, just to pass away the time?"

"Capital idea," Dick decided. "Have you cards?"

"I have that."

"Well, get them, while I order wine, and join me in my state-room, where things will be quiet. I dislike playing in public."

"So do I."

They accordingly went below, and in five minutes were seated at a table in Dick's state-room, with the cards and plenty of wine at command, for Dick meant that his man should not go thirsty.

"What shall the game be?" Hastings asked, after he had partaken of a brimming glass of Old Port.

"Oh, make it something worth while," Dick replied; "say a hundred dollar ante and thousand dollar limit, that is, if you can stand that much?"

"Oh! I can stand twenty times that much!" was the reply. "It shall be as you propose."

And so the play began.

All the afternoon the two men sat at the table and played, with varying luck. At one time Dick was down to his last five hundred dollars; then his luck changed, and he won pot after pot in succession.

When the supper call sounded, he arose from the table, six thousand dollars the winner.

"Quite a haul!" he remarked.

"Never mind," Hastings replied, with stoical coolness. "I'm not broke yet, by a long shot, and you'll find me the gamest man you ever met. We'll try it over again, and either I'll break you before we reach Melbourne, or you'll break me."

"All right! That's a bargain."

And after agreeing to a continuation of the game, in the evening, the two went to supper.

Sylvan was at the table, but never once glanced at the man she loved, nor did Dick more than give her a passing notice.

Hastings noticed this fact, and looked puz-

zled, for Sylvan's pretty face attracted much attention from the other male passengers seated at the table.

After supper, Dick went on deck and smoked a cigar, and while there, he heard a great commotion, forward, and cries of:

"A fight! a fight!"

Something told him that Jolly Johnson was in some way concerned in the rumpus, and a few bounds brought him to the scene of the trouble, just as a cry went up, of—

"Man overboard! man overboard!"

It was several minutes, owing to the crowded state of the fore part of the vessel, ere Dick could find out what the trouble was.

By this time, the man who had gone overboard, had been hauled up on deck, and proved to be no one else but Jolly Johnson!

Two other participants in the *melee*, had been handcuffed by the vessel officers, and were taken below.

They were no other personages than Nick Noodle, and Jack Hurd *alias* Blackthorn.

"Your servant came near getting a watery grave," the ship's captain said, tapping Dick on the shoulder.

"Why, what was the matter?"

"Oh! the tough and the other negro, whom I have had put in irons, are a hard crowd. I've noticed they have been trying to pick a quarrel with your servant, all day, and warned them to desist. But they didn't appear to pay any attention to my orders, and a bit ago, I saw the white fellow step up and slap Jasper, as you call him, in the face.

"Jasper promptly retaliated, by knocking down both the white tough and the other negro. In doing so, however, he slipped and fell, and then they both pounced upon him, and threw him overboard.

"I saw the whole affair, and quickly threw Jasper a life-line, which he had the presence of mind to seize, and in that way his life was saved!"

"What will you do with the two assailants?"

"Keep them in irons until we reach Melbourne, and then turn them over to the authorities."

As soon as Dick could reach Jolly, he hurried him off to his state-room, and from among the assortment of disguises, a fair suit was selected, and donned.

"I thought I was a goner, for sure," he said, "but I guess I've got some o' your cat luck, Dick."

"Why were you tackled?"

"I don't know, unless it was because they discovered that I was not a genuine black, and suspected who I was. I gave 'em two sockdolagers, right from the shoulder, that they won't soon forget, anyhow."

"Well, they'll not bother you again, while we're on shipboard," Dick informed his pard, "for the captain has had them put in irons. I haven't seen either of them speak to Hastings, and so, if they had any suspicions, I don't think they communicated them to him!"

Later in the evening, Dick and Hastings met in the former's compartment, and the second bout at poker was soon under way.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE WINNING HAND.

THE good ship Gallant bowled along right merrily over the waves of the Pacific, encountering nothing but fair weather from the time she left Frisco, until she sighted Melbourne.

It was after dark, when she entered Melbourne Harbor, and dropped anchor, to await the coming of morning before steaming up to her pier.

At the same time the anchor was sent a-spinning, Deadwood Dick and Henry Hastings sat at the table in the former's state-room, playing what was destined to be their last game of poker, together.

"There is my last thousand dollars!" Hastings said, grimly, as he slapped several bank-notes down upon the table. "If you win that, you beat me out of the last cent I have, in the world!"

"Sorry for you," Dick replied, complacently, "but I believe it was your own proposition that we should play until one or the other was broke, was it not?"

"Yes, so it was. But, I ain't broke yet, you see. My luck may change. Deal the cards and we'll make our bets before we look at our hands. You are a card sharp, but I feel that I shall win, this time!"

Dick dealt the cards, five to Hastings and five to himself.

"Now, then," said Hastings, shoving forward his money, "there's my money up. Cover it!"

Dick did so.

Two thousand dollars was in the pot.

"Now, if I show you that I hold the winning hand, the pot is mine, I suppose?" Hastings observed.

"Exactly. What have you got?"

Hastings turned his cards over.

"Three sixes!" he exclaimed, triumphantly.

"Very good!" Dick said, coolly, "but not good enough. I have a royal flush!"

"That's good, but does not win!"

"How do you make that out?"

"Because I hold the winning hand!"

"I fail to see it, sir."

"Then, maybe you see it now!" the villain hissed, and, with lightning quickness, he produced a cocked six-shooter, and leveled at Dick's heart. "Deadwood Dick, you've played well, but lost, and now, you die like the dog you are!"

The next instant, there was a ringing report of the weapon.

Dick Bristol partly arose from his chair, with a gasp, but sunk back again, and thence tumbled to the floor, insensible.

"At last!" Hastings gritted, as he left his seat, and hurried around to where the detective lay as motionless as a log. "I gave him timely warning, and no one is to blame for his death but himself! I must get the money, and then leave the steamer at once. It won't do for me to remain here until morning, under any circumstances!"

He quickly rifled his victim's pockets, of everything valuable, and then, placing the weapon he had fired in close proximity to Dick's right hand, he gathered up the cards, and slipped quietly from the state-room, to his own compartment.

Owing to the noise consequent upon lowering of the anchor, the report of the pistol-shot evidently had not attracted any attention.

In fifteen minutes more both Hastings and Sylvan were on deck, the latter heavily veiled.

Approaching the captain, Hastings said:

"We would like to go ashore to-night, sir."

"Impossible," the captain replied. "No passengers will be landed before to-morrow."

"But this is a matter of greatest importance," the king of rogues assured. "This young lady, my niece, was some time ago left a large fortune, payable to her providing she laid claim to it within a certain length of time. We have experienced much delay in getting to this country, and if my niece does not get to Melbourne in time to lay claim to the money, to-night, before twelve o'clock, she forfeits the entire fortune!"

"Well, that's bad, sure enough!" the captain declared, "but I reckon you'll have to wait till the health officers comes aboard, which, most likely, won't be until morning. It's against rules to land passengers until they are inspected."

"But, I tell you, we *must* go ashore!" Hastings declared, working himself into a passion. "If we stay here until morning we will be the loser by ten thousand pounds. See here! you can give me a voucher to give to the health officer, that we are all O. K., and that will settle the whole matter. Put us ashore and I'll give you five hundred dollars!"

"Impossible, sir. Can't do it."

"I'll give you a thousand, then!"

The captain scratched his head and whistled. A thousand dollars was a big sum of money, in his estimation.

After deliberating a moment he went and spoke to the first mate.

Finally he returned and said:

"Well, it's a risky piece of business to attempt, but, as your business ashore is so urgent, I'll try and accommodate you. So let's have the money."

Hastings paid over the money without a murmur. Only too glad was he to get off that vessel had the cost been twice as much.

By the captain's orders a boat was lowered and manned, and a few minutes later Hastings and Sylvan were being rowed rapidly ashore.

Jolly Johnson saw the departure as he stood leaning against the rail on the upper deck.

"By gracious! What does this mean?" he muttered. "I thought no passengers were to go ashore to-night! I must see if Dick knows of this!"

He hurried to the deck below but could find no trace of Dick, and so descended to the state-room, where he found his pard lying his full length upon the floor, apparently lifeless.

With a cry of horror jolly knelt beside his pard and tore open his shirt.

There was a small discolored spot over the heart, but Jolly could find no bullet wound.

Placing his ear over the heart he found that it still beat, but very fast.

Quickly procuring some water he dashed it into Dick's face.

The result was that Dick speedily opened his eyes, and then, after passing his hand across his forehead, several times, he staggered to his feet.

"Another close shave!" he said, pressing his hand in the region of his heart.

"What is the matter?" Jolly asked, anxiously.

"Did you accidentally shoot yourself?"

"Accidentally shoot myself? Well, I should say not. I was playing a wind-up game of poker with Hastings, and had won his last dollar, when he drew a bead on me, and let drive straight at my heart. The bullet rendered me unconscious, and— Yes, by thunder, the rascal has rifled my pockets of every cent of money I had!"

"Worse than that!" Jolly replied, "for our game has flown. They just left the vessel for the shore."

"Thunderation!"

"It's true. That's why I came to find you, to see if you knew anything about it. But, Dick, for the love of goodness, pray explain to me one thing that is a mystery."

"What is that?"

"How is it, that any one can blaze away at your heart without killing you?"

Dick smiled.

"Oh! it's a little contrivance of my own," he said, "being a rubber and silk-inflated saucer, which I wear over the region of my heart. This saucer is inflated with compressed air, and accordingly, when the bullet strikes the saucer, it does not penetrate, if the shot is square in front; it simply rebounds without doing any damage, more than the shock it gives. When the bullet strikes the pad or saucer, it forces out the air around the rim. The saucer is held in place by two rubber strings. When the air escapes, the saucer suddenly contracts to about the size of a silver dollar. This contraction breaks one of the slight rubber strings, and the saucer is thence drawn across my breast, either to one armpit or the other."

"Well, by Jove! you're a brick. Who else in the world but you could ever have conceived such a thing?"

"Well, I don't know about that, but I do know the contrivance has been the means of saving my life several times. But, we must not stand idle here. If Hastings has gone ashore we must give chase. Did Sylvan accompany him?"

"Yes."

"Then, come."

They hastened on deck and sought out the captain.

"I wish to be taken ashore at once," Dick said.

"Impossible, sir. We can land no passengers to-night, sir."

"But, you *must*. You have already sent two ashore, and I demand that the same privilege be accorded to me and my valet."

"Yes, sah! we *demand*, sah, dat de same pwivlidge be concorded us!" put in Jolly, pompously.

"Sorry, sir, but I cannot accommodate you. It was only on account of a matter of life and death that I allowed those passengers to go ashore."

"A matter of life and death, eh? Well, I should say so. Do you know that you have baffled the law, sir? That man when ashore is a fugitive from justice. Before leaving this ship he made an attempt upon my life, and succeeded in robbing me of over twenty thousand dollars."

"The deuce you say."

"I am telling you the truth. I am a United States detective, and I demand to be put ashore."

"Can't do it, sir. I have already imperiled my position by allowing those people to go ashore before the health-officer boarded us."

"But, I tell you we *must* go ashore!"

"Can't help it. You can't go, unless you swim. I shall not land another passenger, to-night, and that settles *that*!" and with a dignified strut; the captain turned away.

Dick was literally "hopping mad," and so was Jolly, but, that was about all the good it did them.

"This is infernally provoking!" Dick growled. Hastings will have full twelve hours the start of us, before we land!"

"That's so," Jolly replied, "but, that ain't the worst drawback: We have no money, even when we do get on shore."

"Oh! I'll attend to that. I have a couple of unset diamonds with me, that will sell at sight,

for a thousand dollars. It's the vexation of waiting here, all night, that's my hurt. I suppose there's no help for it, however!"

Nor was there.

The boat that had taken Hastings and Sylvan ashore, returned, and was reboisted to its crane. Dick and Jolly sat on deck all night, feeling anything but comfortable over the fact that they had again suffered defeat, when their game was within their easy grasp.

After undergoing quarantine inspection, the next morning the Gallant raised anchor, about ten o'clock, and steamed along through the harbor, to her pier, where she discharged her cargo of human freight.

CHAPTER XIV.

SYLVAN IN A NEW ROLE.

A MELBOURNE morning paper contained the following paragraph:

"MURDER!"

"PATROL-OFFICER HAYES FATALLY STABBED; ASSASSIN ESCAPES!"

"Shortly after sunset, last evening, the steamship, Gallant, from 'Frisco, anchored off Quarantine, to await the customary sanitary and custom inspection, before coming to her pier.

"Later in the evening, one of the ship's boats landed two passengers on the pier, and returned to the ship. The passengers landed, were a smooth-faced, well-dressed elderly man, and a black-clad woman, who was heavily veiled.

"As the couple were about to leave the pier, they were intercepted by Officer Hayes, who politely informed them that he should have to take them into custody, until the Gallant had passed inspection the next day.

"At this the male passenger grew furious, and drawing a knife, he plunged it in the officer's breast. Then, he and his companion fled, each taking a different direction.

"It was quite dark, at the time the tragedy occurred, and there were comparatively few persons in the vicinity of the pier; so the strange couple had no difficulty in making their escape.

"When Hayes's body was found by officer Keogh life was extinct. An alarm was immediately sent out, and in a short time every officer on the force was on the lookout for the murderer. Up to the hour of going to press no tidings of an arrest have been received."

When the passengers of the Gallant arrived in Melbourne, they found the people of the city in a very excited state of mind.

It did not take Dick and Jolly long to find out what the cause of the commotion was, and they scarcely felt surprised when they found that Hastings had added another to his list of crimes.

"Well, you can bet it will go tough with our man, if he falls into the hands of these Australians, for their ways and methods are somewhat similar to those of our wild West people. So Sylvan went one way and Hastings the other, eh? Well, I'm glad of that. I hope the girl has cut loose from that accursed villain for good," Dick said.

During that day the two friends wandered aimlessly about the quaint Australian metropolis, with nothing to do but to see what was to be seen.

Where to look for either Sylvan or Hastings, of course they did not know, and there was nothing to do but await the investigation of the police.

Before leaving the Gallant Jolly had, by the use of an alkaline soap, washed the black stains from his face and hands, and resumed his better attire, so that he now looked like himself once more.

Dick had likewise undisguised himself.

During the day they visited several jewelry stores, and finally Dick succeeded in disposing of his diamonds advantageously, receiving for them the comfortable sum of fifteen hundred dollars, which, in fact, they were well worth.

Everybody in Melbourne was greatly exercised over the murder of Officer Hayes, and it was evident the police and local detectives were doing their best to run down the murderer.

During the afternoon Dick paid a visit to the chief of police, and, introducing himself, was cordially received.

To the chief he gave a detailed account of what he knew about Hastings's infamous career, and it proved to be data which the chief highly appreciated.

"Oh! we'll nab the rascal before many hours have elapsed," the official assured, "and if we do, you can rest assured we'll make short work

of him. My force is composed of as wide-awake a set of men as ever did police duty, and they are familiar with every haunt in the city. Hayes was one of my most valuable men, and you can rest assured that no effort will be spared to hunt down the assassin."

"Do you think he is still in the city?"

"I haven't a doubt of it. The outlying patrol squads were the first of all to be notified to look out for him. I am certain he could not have eluded their vigilance. He has most likely taken refuge in some of the lower quarters of the city."

"Have you offered a reward for his capture?"

"Yes; one hundred pounds. If I find it necessary, the city authorities will increase it."

After chatting for a considerable length of time, Dick took his departure, receiving a cordial invitation to call again.

That day passed, and several others followed, without any new developments being made.

Each day Dick and Jolly wandered around the city, in hopes of finding some clew to Hastings's whereabouts, but each day they were unsuccessful.

Gradually public interest in the case began to lag, but the policemen were vigilant and watchful—ceaselessly on the alert.

In the mean time, after a short delay, during which the captain of the Gallant was fined a thousand dollars, and discharged, the before-mentioned steamship started for 'Frisco.

The captain returned with her, but it was only as a passenger.

Blackthorn and Nicodemus Noodle, who had been turned over to the Melbourne authorities, were fined and sentenced to five days' imprisonment. Luckily, they had the money to pay their fines, or they would have got a much longer term.

On the fifth of their stay in Melbourne, Dick and Jolly were treated to a surprise.

It came in the shape of an envelope directed to "Mr. Richard Bristol," at the hotel where they were stopping.

Strangest of all, the envelope bore the postmark of Adelaide.

"A clew at last, I'll wager!" Dick said, "for the directions are in a female hand, and who else can this be from, but Sylvan?"

With great eagerness he tore open the envelope, and took out—a card.

A card, and nothing more, containing the following, printed in red ink:

"DE LONG'S"

CONSOLIDATEL CONTINENTAL CIRCUS

A D E L A I D E .

ADMIT ONE!"

"Well, now, what does this mean?" Dick demanded, staring at Jolly in astonishment. "Who in blazes could have sent me this? I don't know any one in Adelaide no more than I know the man in the moon, and I'm sure I don't know him."

Jolly laughed.

"I see it all," he said. "Your lady love is anchored in a circus, in Adelaide, and not wishing to say so in so many words, has sent you the ticket as a pointer!"

"But, what would she be doing in a circus?"

"Blest if I know. What do you say—shall we go to Adelaide and find out?"

"Both of us must not leave here. Blackthorn and Nick are out of jail to-day, you know, and their every movement must be watched. By that method we are most likely to stumble upon the hiding-place of Hank Hastings!"

"Oh! very well, then; I'll stay behind," Jolly replied. "I had nearly forgotten that two is company, where three is a crowd. Of course, I should awfully hate to be present when you next meet your sweetheart!"

"Oh! dry up!" Dick retorted. "No one has intimated that she is my sweetheart!"

Resolved to solve the meaning of the card, Dick took the very next train for Adelaide, where he arrived in time for the evening performance.

He found the circus to be a concern that divided its time each year between Melbourne, Adelaide, Sydney, and a few other less important towns. It was, in reality, a mixture of every day circus and vaudeville performance, there being no pretensions of a menagerie, except a few snakes, monkeys, and a fat woman in the inevitable "museum."

Procuring a programme, Dick Bristol entered the tent, and succeeded in getting a front seat.

The performance commenced with a crash of alleged music from brazen-throated instruments, and the "grande entree" of gayly caparisoned

men and women on horseback. Then came a painful spell of tumbling, leaping, and other acrobatic exercises. Consulting his programme, Dick saw that the principal event of the evening was a high-wire walking act, viz:

"EXTRA!—SPECIAL ENGAGEMENT—FOR A FEW NIGHTS ONLY.

MADemoiselle LEONORA!

THE QUEEN OF THE SLACK WIRE.

Who, without balance-pole, walks a slack wire suspended Fifteen Feet above the ground!"

"I wonder if Mademoiselle Leonora is Sylvan?" Dick mused. "I see no other act on the bill that she would be likely to take part in."

At last the acrobats took a rest, and 'mid a blare of music, Mlle. Leonora, attired in tinsel skirts and tights, bounded out into the ring.

A regular little fairy, she looked, and while the crowd cheered her vociferously, Dick saw that she was indeed Sylvan!

Seizing a rope, she was drawn up to the lofty perch, attached to a center-pole.

The tent boasted of two center-poles, some twenty feet apart, and at an elevation of fully fifteen feet, the wire was stretched from one pole to the other.

After the band had softened its blatant strains, in a measure, Sylvan put out one dainty foot and tried the wire, which proved to be quite slack.

Then, kissing her finger-tips to the audience, her second foot followed the first, and she stood suspended in mid-air, with nothing but the swaying wire to keep her there.

Then, slowly, carefully, she advanced, step by step, maintaining her balance by the movements of her arms.

At times the wire swayed fearfully, and the audience held their breath, fearful lest she lose her equilibrium and be precipitated to the ground.

Across the wire she walked, and then backward to the perch, her starting-point.

Then she was lowered to the ground, and, kissing her hand to the audience, left the arena amid a thunder of applause.

Just before the performance ended, an usher handed a letter to Dick.

Opening it, he read the following:

"DEAR MR. BRISTOL:—Did I surprise you? I hope I pleased you, rather. I am doing well here, and shall remain until you have fulfilled your mission, and are ready to take me back to 'Frisco. I am sorry I cannot see you personally, but I cannot. When you are ready to leave Australia, you can come for me. Hoping you are well, I remain, Affectionately yours, SYLVAN."

"P. S.—Hastings is hiding somewhere in Melbourne, but I do not know where. I have cut loose from the monster, forever. I found out that he had robbed you of over twenty thousand dollars, and I got fifteen of it away from him without his knowing it. You shall have it when next we meet. I hope it will not be long. SYLVAN."

"P. S. No. 2.—When you come for me, if you ever do, ask only for Mlle. Leonora. That is the only name I go under here. "S."

So Dick was forced to go back to Melbourne without an interview. It caused him no little regret, for, despite the unfavorable story of her past life, he was daily growing to think more and more of her.

CHAPTER XV.

THE END OF THE HUNT.

WHEN Dick arrived back in Melbourne, he found Jolly anxiously awaiting his arrival.

"Well, what's the news?" was asked, after they had shaken hands.

"Well, I think I've tracked the wolf to his lair!" Jolly replied. "I am not certain, but indications point that way. How did you come out?"

"Well, all told, I'm about nine dollars out!"

"What? Didn't you see your charmer?"

"I saw Sylvan, but didn't get a chance to speak to her. She's doing the slack-wire act. She sent me a note, however, saying that Hastings was lying in hiding, somewhere here, but she didn't know where. She also wrote that she had recovered fifteen thousand of what he robbed me of. But, let's hear of your movements?"

"Well, I got onto the trail of Blackthorn and the nigger, soon after they were let out of jail, and tracked them to a cheap hotel in the slums. I was made up as a suspender-selling Sheeney, and so, after they had registered, I registered, too.

"I heard Blackthorn say to the nigger: Well, you go and find if he's there, as the note says, an' then come and tell me, an' I'll go an' make

terms with him!" The nigger went away, and came back, half an hour later. "Yas, he's dar," he said, "bout haff skeered to death." Blackthorn then left the hotel, and was gone over an hour, and when he returned, I overheard him say to the darky: "Yes, I found him, but he swears he has no money, and is starving for want of food. I told him we'd give him till tonight, an' ef he didn't produce, then, we'd give him up to the law. He was near scared to death."

"That was the result of the first day's discovery," said Jolly, in conclusion, "except that last night I traced Blackthorn to the hallway door of a rickety old tenement-house, on Melon street, one of the toughest streets in the Chinese quarter. In fact, the street was such a fearful looking place, that I skipped out, and concluded to wait your return!"

"Well, we'll take a turn around that way, after dinner!" Dick decided.

That afternoon, two perambulating Jewish peddlers made their way into the slums of the city, and paused for a drink, at the Humming Bird Hotel, a most disreputable looking place.

Both looked pretty much alike, spoke in German-English and while one's stock in trade consisted of suspenders, the other vended a cheap line of socks.

"Socks, shendlemen!" he would cry—

"Socks, sixpence a pair,
Varranted to fit;
Der longer you wears dem
Der t'icker dey get!"

After a slight indulgence in sour wine, at the hotel, Isaac and Abraham took their departure. "Did you see Blackthorn?" inquired Isaac, who was Jolly Johnson.

"Mine frient, I saw him!" Dick replied. "All I want, now, is to locate the tenement-house. To-night, after Blackthorn's visit there, I'll call on Mr. Henry Hastings, myself."

They passed through Melon street, and Jolly pointed out the rickety tenement, in question. Then, the two man-hunters returned to their hotel quarters.

Toward dark, Deadwood Dick, in his Jewish disguise, once more made his appearance in the vicinity of the tenement, selling socks. This time he was alone, and having reduced his goods to the astonishing low price of two pair for sixpence, he had no difficulty in finding plenty of purchasers.

This fact did not prevent him from keeping a close watch on the open stairway, leading to the upper stories of the tenement.

Just as he had sold out, and when it was very dark, Blackthorn came along, and mounted the stairway, when, like a flitting shadow, the Jew dogged his footsteps and saw him enter a small apartment on the attic floor.

There was no door to the room, and no furniture except a stool, upon which a candle was burning and an old straw mattress in one corner. Upon this a man lay in a half reclining attitude—a wild-eyed, haggard wretch, the wreck of a once fine-looking person.

He was none other than Henry Hastings, but, ah! so changed from his former self.

He seemed to shrink back closer into the corner, as Blackthorn entered the room.

"Well!" the latter said, in a gruff voice, "I have come for your final answer, old man. I've got tired of running here, and now, are you going to come to time, or not?"

"Blackthorn, as God is my witness, I have not a penny!" was the reply. "You can search me, if you like, but you will find I'm telling you the truth!"

"Bah! you can't lie to me. The gal didn't steal it all from you!"

"Every dollar, or else I lost it in making my escape!"

"That's a likely story. Come, are you going to pony up?"

"I cannot. Have mercy, Blackthorn, have mercy!"

"Bah! I ain't in the mercy line. Once more, and for the last time, shell out!"

Hastings made no reply, but bowed his face in his hands, and groaned aloud.

"Won't come up, hey?" roared Blackthorn.

"Then the police will! Before the night is over you will languish in a murderer's dungeon!" and with this threat he stalked from the attic.

Crouching close under cover, Dick waited until the villain had gone down-stairs, then walked into Hastings's presence, his arms folded across his breast, and his face stern and un-pitying.

Hastings gave a horrified gasp at sight of him.

"Henry Hastings!" the avenger said, "I am

here. I see that, without my aid, you have come, step by step, nearer and nearer to your doom. But I have not come here to carry out my oath of vengeance, so you need not tremble. All I want of you is for you to sign this paper, which places the crime of the murder of Faro Patch upon your own shoulders, and clears Sylvan of all complicity and guilt in that act. After you have signed it, my business with you is done!"

"What!" Hastings gasped, eagerly; "do you mean that if I will sign the paper, you will no longer seek my life?"

"Exactly!"

"Then, let me see the paper. There may be a chance for me yet!"

He clutched the paper Dick handed him, as a drowning man might grasp for a straw.

Dick had drawn up the paper so it would, when signed, free Sylvan of all guilt or connection with the crime whatsoever.

With eager eyes the doomed man scanned each word, and seemed to drink in its full meaning.

Finally he said:

"Swear that you will never molest me again, and I will sign it."

"There is no necessity of swearing. My word is sufficient."

"And you give it?"

"I do."

"Very well. Give me a pencil."

"Here is a self-inking pen. That will answer better."

Hastings took the pen.

His hand was trembling violently, but, with an effort, he managed to indite his signature and return the paper and pencil to Dick.

"Will that do?" he asked.

"Yes, that is satisfactory."

And Dick turned to go.

"Hold on!" Hastings cried. "Tell me of Sylvan. Do you know where she is?"

"Miles from here. You will never see her again."

"Nor do I want to," was the bitter reply.

"And Honora, my daughter. Do you know aught of her?"

"I do not!"

Without further words, Dick departed, and leaving the tenement, he hurried away to the hotel.

On reaching it, Jolly met him expectantly.

"Well?" he demanded, "what luck?"

"I found my man!"

"Where?"

"In the tenement attic floor!"

"Did you get the paper?"

"Yes."

"Then your part of the hunt is ended?"

"Yes!"

"And mine soon will be!" Jolly said, his face growing stern, and he turned abruptly and disappeared.

Dick lounged about the office of the hotel, and awaited his return.

It was fully an hour ere Jolly made his re-appearance, and Dick saw at once that something had gone wrong.

"Well?" he interrogated.

"Too late!" Jolly said, dropping into a chair.

"The police got there before I did, and took Hastings into custody!"

"Ah! then the law will deal with him, and your hands are unstained."

"True. But no law will ever touch him!"

"Why not?"

"Because he is dead!"

"Dead?"

"Yes. As they dragged him away to the jail, the poor guilty wretch died of sheer terror!"

"It is better thus!" Dick said. "It ought to be satisfaction enough for us that our chase is at an end!"

Several days later, an Australian steamer started for San Francisco.

Among its passengers were Deadwood Dick, Jolly Johnson and Sylvan.

The weather was fair, and the trip was made in due time.

During the voyage Jolly and Sylvan became fast friends, and were so much in each other's society, that Dick could but accept it as a foregone conclusion that he was literally out of the race for the pennant—that his chances of securing Sylvan were two to one in Jolly's favor—to which he did not dissent. Now that the helpless girl had a sure protector, the detective felt no more responsibility in the matter, and was content.

Arriving in San Francisco, Dick found a tele-

gram awaiting him, demanding his early presence in the city of Galveston, Texas.

So, leaving Jolly to settle up Sylvan's matters, Richard, Junior, set out for the Gulf City, to participate in a new and most exciting drama.

THE END.

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- 45 Old Avalanche; or, Wild Edna, the Girl Brigand.
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- 121 Cinnamon Chip, the Girl Sport.
- 125 Bonanza Bill, Miner.
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- 141 Solid Sam, the Boy Road-Agent.
- 145 Captain Ferret, the New York Detective.
- 161 New York Nell, the Boy-Girl Detective.
- 177 Nobby Nick of Nevada; or, The Sierras Scamps.
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- 213 Fritz to the Front; or, The Ventriloquist Hunter.
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- 236 Apollo Bill, the Trail Tornado.
- 240 Cyclone Kit, the Young Gladiator.
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- 248 Sierra Sam's Secret; or, The Bloody Footprints.
- 253 Sierra Sam's Pard; or, The Angel of Big Vista.
- 258 Sierra Sam's Seven; or, The Stolen Bride.
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- 281 Denver Doll's Victory.
- 285 Denver Doll's Decoy; or, Little Bill's Bonanza.
- 291 Turk, the Boy Ferret.
- 296 Denver Doll's Drift; or, The Road Queen.
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- 308 Liza Jane, the Girl Miner; or, The Iron-Nerved Sport.
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- 334 Kangaroo Kit, the Mysterious Miner.
- 338 Kangaroo Kit's Racket.
- 343 Manhattan Mike, the Bowery Blood.
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- 416 High Hat Harry, the Base Ball Detective.
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- 434 Jim Beak and Pal, Private Detectives.
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- 222 Grit, the Bravo Sport; or, The Woman Trailer.
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- 237 Lone Star, the Cowboy Captain.
- 245 Merle, the Middy; or, The Freelance Heir.
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- 276 Merle Monte's Cruise; or, "The Gold Ship" Chase.
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- 308 Keno Kit; or, Dead Shot Dandy's Double.
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- 402 Isador, the Young Conspirator; or, The Fatal League.
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- 474 Flora; or, Wizard Will's Vagabond Pard.
- 483 Ferrets Afloat; or, Wizard Will's Last Case.
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- 535 The Bue skin Rovers.
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- 570 Camille, the Card Queen.
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- 656 Butterfly Billy's Man Hunt.
- 662 Butterfly Billy's Bonanza.
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- 126 Pleasure Pete; or, Nicodemus, the Dog Detective.
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- 147 Will Wildfire, the Thoroughbred.
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- 183 The Hidden Hand; or, Will Wildfire's Revenge.
- 187 Fred Hylard, the Life Boat Boy; or, The Smugglers.
- 189 Bob Rockett; or, Driven to the Wall.
- 196 Shadowed; or, Bob Rockett's Fight for Life.
- 206 Dark Paul, the Tiger King.
- 212 Dashing Dave, the Dandy Detective.
- 220 Tom Tanner; or, The Black Sheep of the Flock.
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- 235 Shadow Sam, the Messenger Boy.
- 242 The Two "Bloods"; or, Shenandoah Bill and His Gang.
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- 262 The Young Sharps; or, Rollicking Mike's Hot Trail.
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- 432 Invincible Logan, the Pinkerton Ferret.
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- 466 Wide-Awake Jerry, Detective; or, Entombed Alive.
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- 501 Boots, the Boy Fireman; or, Too Sharp for the Sharper.
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- 58 The Border King; or, The Secret Foe.
- 71 Delaware Dick, the Young Ranger Spy.
- 74 Hawk-eye Harry, the Young Trapper Ranger.
- 88 Rollo, the Boy Ranger.
- 134 Sure Shot Seth, the Boy Rifleman.
- 143 Sear-Face Saul, the Silent Hunter.
- 146 Silver Star, the Boy Knight.
- 153 Eagle Kit, the Boy Demon.
- 163 Little Texas, the Young Mustang.
- 178 Old Solitary, the Hermit Trapper.
- 182 Little Hurricane, the Boy Captain.
- 202 Prospect Pete; or, The Young Outlaw Hunter.
- 208 The Boy Hercules; or, The Prairie Tramps.
- 218 Tiger Tom, the Texas Terror.
- 224 Dashing Dick; or, Trapper Tom's Castle.
- 228 Little Wildfire, the Young Prairie Nomad.
- 238 The Parson Detective; or, The Little Ranger.
- 243 The Disguised Guide; or, Wild Raven, the Ranger.
- 260 Dare-Devil Dan, the Young Prairie Ranger.
- 272 Minkskin Mike, the Boy Sharpshooter.
- 290 Little Foxfire, the Boy Spy.
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- 334 Whip-King Joe, the Boy Ranchero.
- 409 Hercules; or, Dick, the Boy Ranger.
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- 444 Little Buckskin, the Young Prairie Centaur.
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- 482 Stonewall Bob, the Boy Trojan.
- 562 Blundering Basil, the Hermit Boy Trapper.
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- 94 Midnight Jack; or, The Boy Trapper.
- 106 Old Frosty, the Guide; or, The White Queen.
- 123 Kiowa Charley, the White Mustang.
- 139 Judge Lynch, Jr.; or, The Boy Vigilante.
- 155 Gold Trigger, the Sport; or, The Girl Avenger.
- 169 Tornado Tom; or, Injun Jack from Red Cora.
- 188 Ned Temple, the Border Boy.
- 198 Arkansas; or, The Queen of Fate's Revenge.
- 207 Navajo Nick, the Boy Gold Hunter.
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- 521 Dodger Dick's Best Dodge.
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- 538 Dodger Dick, the Dock Ferret.
- 543 Dodger Dick's Doublet; or, The Rival Boy Detectives.
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- 573 The Two Shadows.
- 582 Dodger Dick's Drop.
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